DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 820 CS 007 890

AUTHOR Kline, Lloyd W.
TITLE Learning to Read, Teaching to Read.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-931733-00-6
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 98p.
AVAILABLE FROM LWK Enterprises, Post Office Box 1127, Newark, DE 19715 ($6.95 per copy, prepaid, includes shipping; discounts available for orders of five or more copies; for foreign orders add 25%.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Patterns; Individual Development; Influences; Language Acquisition; Language Processing; *Reading Ability; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Habits; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Processes

ABSTRACT

Intended for those who want to know more about reading and how it is taught, but who will themselves probably not specialize in the teaching of reading, this book addresses such questions as (1) Why read? (2) What motivation does one have for reading? and (3) What does reading provide as a means of communication that cannot just as easily be provided by other means? The book's content is divided into six sections, with the first section--on motivation--reviewing the basic concept of language as a facet of human behavior. The second section--on concepts--treats the ability to read as a natural progression in the development of the individual human being, and further defines reading as one of the most valuable of social tools. The third section--on techniques--outlines basic approaches to the teaching of reading in most schools, while the fourth section--dealing with factors--reviews some of the many psychological, physiological, and linguistic processes and capabilities that are believed to play important roles in reading ability. The fifth section provides a historical perspective on what reading is and does, as well as what it is not and what it does not do. Finally, the sixth section examines those factors that influence reading attitudes. The book also includes a glossary of reading jargon and a list of two dozen sources, complete with names and addresses. (HOD)

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LLOYD W. KLINE

# LEARNING TO READ, TEACHING TO READ

*. . . for those who cherish reading*

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# LEARNING TO READ, TEACHING TO READ

LLOYD W. KLINE

*. . . for those who cherish reading—*
*and who want others to cherish it, too.*

LWK Enterprises
Post Office Box 1127
Newark, DE 19715

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 84-82438

ISBN: 0-931733-00-6

KLINE, Lloyd W. **Learning to Read, Teaching to Read.** Copyright 1985 by Lloyd W. Kline. Published at $6.95 per copy by LWK Enterprises, Post Office Box 1127, Newark, DE 19715, USA.

1. Education 2. Reading 3. Language

Typesetting by Benson Composition
Printing by BookMaster

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INTRODUCTION

## Why this book?

Many people who read easily and well think that all others should read and learn to read just as easily. If only they would apply themselves! If only they were taught properly!

Few people are aware of the complexity of the reading process. Few recognize the many factors that can disrupt or impede the process in some individuals.

Few people even use the word *reading* with exactly the same meaning. Some think immediately of *reading materials:* "That book is very good reading." Others, of the *process of reading:* "Many factors influence a child's reading ability." Or, of *reading aloud:* "Young people today seem to read with so little expression." Or, of particular *kinds* or *purposes of reading:* "I read as often as I can get to a library!" (ignoring newspapers, billboards, captions on television, correspondence, traffic signs?).

Little wonder that there is so much controversy in the popular media about reading and how it is taught. Little wonder that there is so much miscommunication about its teaching, learning, and practice. Even those most interested in it seem to be unified only in their belief that reading is an important activity in human life.

Reading is at once a complex process and something taken very much for granted in our society. We know a lot about how it is taught, little or nothing about how it is learned. Few topics are more complicated to try to understand; yet, few have been described popularly by more simplistic statements. While it is only one of several interrelated uses of language and underlies a great many of the normal activities of life, it is often thought of and taught as a separate subject, something isolated from other pursuits and activities.

In the world of schooling, huge gaps sometimes loom between teachers and parents in their knowledge and attitudes about what reading is and how it is taught. Indeed, few teachers have themselves been trained thoroughly in the teaching of reading. Even those who concentrate on reading

as an educational specialty do not always agree on some of the basic questions and beliefs about it. Few parents can recall exactly how they themselves learned to read; yet, most assume that learning to read is the primary reason that they send their youngsters to school in first, second, and third grades. Many become terribly and understandably upset if their child reaches tenth grade, for instance, reading on a fifth grade level, thoroughly dismayed if a child cannot read at all by second or third grade.

Almost everyone agrees, however, that reading is central to education, and useful and important in the lives most of us lead. So much so that one of our most popular misconceptions is that ability to read is equivalent to intelligence. How many people mistakenly believe that *illiterate* (unable to read) means almost the same as *unintelligent* (not too bright)!

*Learning to Read, Teaching to Read* is intended particularly for those who want to know more about reading and how it is taught, but who will themselves probably *not* specialize in the teaching of reading. It has been written for those persons who find the standard college textbook on reading instruction too massive and detailed, the typical "supermarket guide" too simplistic and superficial.

At the same time, those who do formally teach reading will find in this book viewpoints and perspectives that sometimes seem to get lost in reading instruction as an educational specialty, viewpoints and perspectives that might very well broaden their outlooks, attitudes, and appreciation.

Except for a few examples and illustrations in passing, this book will not provide exercises, lessons, and instructional devices. Such materials and information proliferate in classrooms, newsstands, and supermarkets throughout the country, and are thus readily available. It will, however, provide a framework and context for considering and using or ignoring such exercises, techniques, and materials.

Neither will this book "review the professional literature," as those in educational research use the phrase. The comprehensive attitude which I hope this book achieves within an economical format simply precludes a massive, detailed summary of formal research. Again, such information is readily available for those who want it. This book will, however, reflect the author's general acquaintance with such "literature." Check any university library or the myriad professional journals in the educational specialties surrounding

instruction in reading.

Whether you are a teacher in a classroom, an adult at home responsible for a student in school, or simply a person interested in reading as one of humanity's most remarkable inventions, if this book gives you a reasonably accurate overview of reading instruction, if it suggests how you can help those who are learning to read, if it leads you to further exploration in the field of reading, or, most of all, if it eases communication about reading, it will have more than satisfied its author's best intentions.

And, of course, I hope it offers more than one or two perspectives on reading that you haven't already discovered on your own.

## How this book is organized

Ability to read and the practice of reading are so much taken for granted in our society that we tend to overlook the fact that reading has wellsprings just as any other human endeavor has reasons for existence and practice. What motivation do we have for reading? Why read? Why reading? What are our reasons, our *motives* for reading anything at all? What does reading provide as a means of communication that cannot just as easily be provided by other means?

With such questions asked and explored in **"Why read? Why reading?"** (MOTIVATION), the book moves into a review of basic concepts of language as a facet of human behavior, concepts that underlie virtually every program of reading instruction in the United States. **"We talk, we act, we are—we read"** (CONCEPTS) treats ability to read as a natural progression in the development of the individual human being. It further defines reading as one of the most valuable of social tools, allowing us to transcend time and place with remarkable ease and efficiency.

**"Whole cloth and silver threads"** (TECHNIQUES) outlines basic approaches to the teaching of reading in most schools, approaches which tend to reflect one or another or both of two markedly different philosophies about human development and the nature of language. Essentially, the fundamental argument hinges over two divergent points of view. Do the basic structures of language exist primarily in the minds and early experiences of those who then "learn" to read, or do those basic patterns and meanings exist primarily in the

language itself, language which learners must be "taught" to recognize if they are ever to learn to read at all?

**"Glitches, ghosts, and remedies"** (FACTORS) reviews some of the many, many psychological, physiological, and linguistic processes and capabilities that are believed to play important roles in anyone's ability to read—and thus in the disabilities of those who are less successful at learning to read than others would have them be. The "medical model" of "diagnosis and remediation" that results from analysis of such factors has heavily influenced the development of many instructional programs in reading used in schools today—for able readers as well as for "disabled" readers.

Quite possibly because of certain such developments in formal reading instruction during the past half century, it is more than ever important for all of us—educators, adults directly responsible for learners, critical observers, or simply interested readers—*to* regain historical perspective on what reading is and does, as well as what it is not and what it does not do. Thus, a short HISTORY of **"Language, letters, and scenes."**

Because one of the major hopes the author holds for this volume is that it will help individuals converse with greater light and less heat about how reading is learned and taught and practiced in our society, a section on ATTITUDES, **"Where am I? Where are you? Where are they?,"** seems absolutely essential. "Don't knock me," goes the vernacular translation of an American Indian proverb, "until you have walked a mile in my moccasins." Let me know where you stand before I proceed to try to push you into new territory, if indeed I then any longer feel the need to do so.

We all know deep in our hearts that there are at least two kinds of educators: some work in the schools, those we normally label as educators. And, there are those who "educate" simply as adults responsible for or interested in others who are learning to read or not to read. Those educators who work in the schools so often seem to surround themselves and their specialities with jargon, the secret language of an elite in any given field. Their professional conversations can be all but lost on those who educate outside the schools. Thus, *Learning to Read, Teaching to Read* would be incomplete without a GLOSSARY geared to **"Unlocking the jargon"**—at least to some small extent—especially for those educators who work in the home, the community, the larger world where

the learner lives most of the time.

Finally, because this book has been designed to offer a comprehensive overview of its subject as economically as possible, there simply is no room in it for the exercises, sample lessons, illustrative materials, and expanded information that many people might want, especially those interested in following through for whatever purpose. I have listed about two dozen SOURCES, complete with **Names and addresses**, that should at least function as a starting point for anyone who seeks further information and materials.

That is a quick sketch of the rest of the book that lies before you. Read as you will; savor as you read.

## Why read? Why reading?

What is the status of reading in the United States today?

First, there are relatively few Americans who *cannot* read anything at all, and fewer still who cannot ever *learn* to read. There will probably never be enough people who read as well as they *could*—that is, to the level of their potential, both in their skill as readers and in the intellectual content of what they choose to read. No one knows how many are completely illiterate.

There can never be, in a literate democracy like ours, enough people who read *often enough, deeply enough, widely enough.* No one really knows how many people *do not* read. Those of us who are convinced of the importance of reading can only hope that plenty of people *do* read.

If you do not read in our society, you simply are not in tune with the world around you. You cannot even expect to drive a car or cross a well-marked street with much confidence, since road signs, warnings, directions, maps all wait to be read.

There are very, very few who *will not* read, given the right time, the right material, the right reason.

In that statement lies the key to motivation: bringing the right material and the potential reader together at the most appropriate moment for reasons most convincing to that potential reader. But, turning the key is no easy task!

It is not simple to define why reading is important. Most of us who read easily, often, and well, do not spend much time asking ourselves why we read. It is even more difficult to convince others that reading is important, especially those who do not read, who do not want to read, and who think there is no need to read.

Turning the key to motivation requires extremely sensitive personal judgment, fortuitous timing, diligent observation, broad resources. Know as much as you can about the processes and materials of reading, but, above all else, about the moment and the individual you hope to motivate.

In trying to develop a good case for reading, there are

probably as many paths to be taken as there are people to argue and discuss the question. How can we come to strong conclusions? How can we convince those who need to be convinced that reading is important enough to deserve their time and effort and support?

While there are any number of ways, none is guaranteed. Each works with some; probably none works with all.

Try them. Find out. Don't give up!

## Why people read

We can seek to identify readers, find out what they read and why they read it, then try to apply what we learn from them to those who do not read. That approach is often taken both by educators and by leaders in the publishing industry.

As early as the 1920s, educational researchers like William S. Gray (who later helped develop the Dick and Jane books for elementary reading instruction) surveyed cross sections of the population to try to find out what it was that people read, and why they read it. In a similar way, through most of the twentieth century, sales reports, market analyses, and readership studies have guided editors and publishers of books, magazines, and newspapers in deciding what to publish.

Readership surveys were not at all a foundation for the earliest reading instruction in this country. Where we now ask people what and why they read so that we might better instruct them and serve their purposes, early American leaders, both religious and political, pronounced quite self-confidently why everyone should be taught to read at public expense.

For instance, in 1647, Massachusetts legally instituted public reading instruction so that "that old deluder, Satan" might be prevented from "keep(ing) men from the knowledge of the Scriptures." Little more than a century later, Thomas Jefferson promoted universal reading instruction in Virginia so that citizens would learn history, develop morality, and "render... the people safe, as they are the ultimate guardians of their own liberty."

Conversely, slaves in pre-1865 America were generally kept illiterate so they would remain unenlightened, subservient, and thus easier to control, to dehumanize in an alien society. Forced illiteracy was calculated by slave owners to prevent the full development of aspiring human beings.

While most of us would probably not return to the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, even if we could, and certainly not to the antebellum institution of slavery, there are also problems with the more recent practice of surveying people about their reading habits, then using results of the survey as guidelines for motivation and reading instruction. Asking people what they do and why they do it is far from guaranteeing completely honest answers. Even among nonreaders, few in our society can admit to themselves or to others that they do not think reading is important or that they cannot or do not read.

Reading has earned such a mystique within our society that everyone believes we are all supposed to be able to read, should like to read, and should read often, well, and widely. If as individuals we do not meet such commonly held expectations, it is tough to admit it publicly. It is tougher yet if the person asking us about it is an educator or a publisher or someone else with a special interest in reading.

Furthermore, there are always problems of definition. What do you mean by reading? Scanning a few headlines at the bus stop newsstand? Reading a novel a week? Popular magazines? Textbooks? One line of a poem? A paragraph? A five-volume series of biographies?

Who is taking the poll and reporting its results? For what purposes? Will interpretations be entirely objective? Publishers can hardly be expected to report that very few people read their books or magazines. Busy librarians rarely see nonreaders. Teachers of remedial reading, who work constantly with youngsters who have failed in regular classrooms, cannot be expected to trumpet the general success that those same elementary classrooms have achieved rather routinely in teaching almost all other youngsters to read quite satisfactorily if not remarkably well.

It can be helpful to ask people what they read, how much they read, and why they read, but the technique can come up with as many different reasons and patterns of response as there are readers, respondents, things to be read, and occasions for reading.

You might come up with a winning motivational argument, you might not.

## Roundabout research

In other attempts to define the place and importance of reading in our society, and thus provide arguments for learning

to read, some have studied the workplace. Trying to rule out the possibility of erring self-perceptions in both readers and nonreaders, they have generally reported their own academic observations of how people spend their time and carry out their jobs.

Invariably, such studies have indicated that communication is a major activity in American working life, and that reading plays a far more pervasive and important role in the communication than most people realize. Indeed, such studies have added to the general label that ours is an "information society."

One observer, John Bormuth, calculated for an article in the journal *Visible Language* (1978) that reading accounted for 23.9 percent of America's gross national product, a convoluted but logical estimate of the dollar value of literacy.

The arguments for reading that are inherent in such reports as these might convince nonreaders or reluctant readers; they might not.

Of course, there are again problems with such observations and analyses: too many definitions of *reading*, too many possible interpretations, too few specific workplaces studied, too much skepticism about the truth available in statistics of any kind.

Others have analyzed essentially what is in print to determine reasons for reading. Maybe you can frame the magic title, discover the secret topic, place the irresistible bait that will make a bookworm of a slug.

On the other hand, such an approach is like assuming that a restaurant menu, however extensive, represents all the raw food in the world from which meals can be created. It measures what is immediately available, not what is potential in the ability to read nor particularly motivating to those who do not read.

By far the biggest problem with asking what and why people read is that it offers few reasons that will convince nonreaders that they ought to read. Such an approach tends simply to ask what is the status quo among readers in contemporary society rather than what ought to be. Motivation, however, is a matter of trying to convince nonreaders or people learning to read of something that *ought to be* part of their lives.

## Personal approaches to motivation

Faced with problems of motivation, educators long ago began to differentiate between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation for reading and for learning to read.

Briefly, extrinsic motivation offers a gold star, or a piece of candy, or some free time in school, for whatever evidence of achievement or interest in reading the learner exhibits. Intrinsic motivation, by contrast, exists in the specific attractiveness that a given piece of reading holds for a given youngster at a given moment—not an easy phenomenon to engineer!

There is strong belief and some empirical evidence that intrinsic motivation can be developed in youngsters as early as their preschool and kindergarten years by such classroom and home activities as reading regularly to youngsters; letting them retell stories pretty much on their own, perhaps with supportive prompts such as "Then what happened?"; regular trips from home to local libraries; use of classroom libraries; the use of puppets, "roll movies," role playing, felt boards in retelling stories.

Romantic bibliophiles often resort to the sort of motivation implied in Emily Dickinson's poetic statement, "There is no frigate like a book/To take us lands away...."

Don't be disappointed if the approach proves to the reluctant reader only that lovers of books love books. What is unique, after all, about a book's ability to provide escape or expansion? Alcohol, drugs, television, simple daydreaming—any of a thousand other techniques can provide the same effect with less effort than reading.

Transmitting information, putting ideas in order, solving personal problems, recreation, the litany of every textbook on reading instruction and every publisher's advertising blurb in the world—all offer reasons to read. But which are unique to reading? Which will convince the reluctant reader, the nonreader, that reading is worth the while?

* * *

If you yourself are genuinely convinced that reading is important, and if such approaches as we have reviewed to this

point have led to more frustration for you than motivation for those who do not read, you might ask why. Even though they work for some people sometimes, most of those approaches and arguments come off somewhat like asking people who like to eat why they choose the foods they do.

We forget that the basic motivation for eating comes not from food selection, but from a generic and universal need for nourishment. And, we forget that in the matter of reading we are, more often than not, trying to motivate those who have chosen not to eat! There is limited value in compiling and analyzing personal preferences in food if our target audience believes that there are real alternatives to eating. Ask rather what food does that nothing else does?

What does reading do that nothing else does, at least not so easily and effectively?

I hope you believe strongly enough in the importance of reading to ask such questions. If not, you may never motivate someone else to read.

## Questions to ask of reading

If there were no such thing as a page of print, at this stage in our civilization, would we invent the process of reading? What needs does it serve better than anything else? What goals does it meet? Can its usefulness be delivered by other means? What originally motivated the development of writing and thus of reading? Can we get along without it? What would we miss, if anything?

After all, reading as a popular pursuit is at most only about five hundred years old. In Western civilization, at least, the quest for universal literacy had to wait for the introduction of the printing press in the late fifteenth century.

Common literacy is still not prevalent in certain huge societies in the world. As an activity it does not even necessarily predominate in some so-called literate societies—at least it does not predominate in all its potential for all people for all purposes.

What advantages does reading provide, then? What functions does it serve? Are the original purposes for reading valid today? Does it provide the same advantages, serve the same purposes that it did originally?

Why is reading worth the time and effort? Can other processes, other habits, other methods of communication take

its place? Can they serve its purposes more efficiently and with greater advantage, both for individuals and for the society in which they live? Have other processes, other habits, other methods of communication already done so?

One of the best reasons for learning to read, of course, can be seen in turning the question around. If we had not as humans invented reading and writing, would we have arrived where we are as a civilization? Some people say that without the printed page there would be no civilization as we know it today. Certainly, without literacy, civilization would not have developed with the particular characteristics it now has. It might have developed in ways and patterns we cannot even conceive.

## What reading makes possible

Rather than seek futilely for historical records that probably no longer exist, if they ever did, we can presume certain historical purposes for reading and writing. We can do so by looking at reading in the context of our several uses of language—speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking.

No one, after all, can be credited with being the inventor of reading and writing. Indeed, we are quite certain that reading and writing *evolved* over long centuries of human experience. No mad genius rushed out one fine morning and shouted to neighbors, "I have just invented reading and writing!"

Some would argue over the question of whether or not we should include *thinking* as a language function. Can we not, after all, think without using words in the process?

Rather than pursue that tedious and endless debate, let us simply note that while we might be able to think wordlessly, it is also quite apparent to all of us that we certainly are able to think in words and sentences. Thus, we can consider thinking to be at least in part one way by which we use language. Who would deny that we can "talk to ourselves" without uttering a sound?

A far more important question to ask when considering motivation: what does reading make possible more effectively and efficiently than any other language activity? What can reading provide more effectively and efficiently than any other means of communication—film, television, recordings, telegraphy, telephone, whatever? Why read? Why reading? More basically and historically, what do reading and writing make

possible that listening and speaking do not?

First, the message that can be read achieves a degree of certainty that oral/aural messages do not. While one can always deny authorship, one cannot deny the existence of what appears as print on paper, etching on stone, squiggle on parchment. "It must be true; I saw it in print!" Granted that the person who believes so naively in the printed page is hardly a seasoned reader, there is still a popular, measurable truth in the misconception. We trust what we read far more than what we hear.

Second, material that can be read provides a permanence that oral/aural messages do not. A spoken message ends with a phone call, a conversation, a whisper in the ear. Until sound recording was developed in the late nineteenth century, there was no way to recall that message precisely and no way to duplicate it.

If you want to make sure you have at least stated your message, as we say, put it in writing. As a message that can be read, it is less vulnerable to error and misunderstanding. Words spoken last as long as the air currents of which they are formed. By contrast, a note to the milkman, as Robert Frost pointed out, lasts to eternity, so long as ink and paper survive and people continue to read.

We still record our most treasured documents visually—birth and death certificates, deeds of ownership, bonds of business and matrimony. Legendarily, our most fundamental beliefs we record in granite, as Moses transmitted the Laws of Jehovah to his people, and as we inscribe the Lincoln Memorial or Kennedy's gravestones.

Third, the simple portability of print allows a message to transcend time and place with incredible ease. We have sent messages to be read into space, received similar messages from centuries and civilizations long gone, and stored still others in capsules to be opened centuries from now.

We can carry a classic piece of literature of our own choosing in our pocket or our purse, and open it at will anywhere anytime. My own pocket invariably carries one or more written notes to myself about things to do or ideas to pursue.

Fourth, it is little wonder, then, that reading has achieved a certain mystique in our culture. There is indeed no magic like a book, to paraphrase Emily Dickinson's poem from a different point of view. From its earliest development, the written language has been imbued with specialty, mystery, sacredness.

At various stages of civilization, especially before the introduction into Europe of the printing press, what could be read was held to be the special property and under the special protection of priests and oracles. In its noblest applications, it is no less special today.

## The aftermath of Gutenberg

What effect has the proliferation of printing in Western civilization since the fifteenth century had on these four characteristics of reading? What of the more recent technological developments in mass communication?

The legacy of Gutenberg has certainly moved in two different directions. Few historians see the introduction of printing into Europe and its resulting democratization of literacy as less than a major factor in: the demise of feudalism, a revolution in religious persuasion and autocracy, the development of popular culture and democracy, the social and economic liberation of the lower classes, and the general development of universal educational opportunity.

At the same time, mass printing has led to throwaway print. It has cheapened an art and an ability that once were held to be the province only of wizards and seers. The technology that first produced Bibles and classics from the ancient Greeks now churns out daily gossip sheets, advertising puffs, and hourly stock quotations as well.

Continuing developments in the technology of mass communication change the shape of literacy from month to month. Today's computerized audiovisual telecommunication by satellite is obsolete with tomorrow's new product announcement.

But so it has been for a century or more. And print remains. The film, the tape, the laser, the silicon chip—they are simply different from the page of print. Period. The technologies of communication they represent are not in competition with what can be read, nor are they a substitute for it.

We do not face either/or choices among the miracles of contemporary communication. We simply enjoy different ways of sharing similar chunks of life and experience, some most appropriate to print, some more appropriate to other means of communication.

The Age of McLuhan has resulted not in print's obsolescence, but simply in greater volumes of print and far more options than ever before.

## So, what do we say to nonreaders?

Now, all these questions and great big thoughts are fine for those of us who like to read, who are already well into the habit of reading, who believe in reading, yea, who *depend* on reading as an integral part of the best that life and civilization have to offer. What do they say to the youngster entering kindergarten, the preteen who hasn't yet learned to read, the teenager or young adult or not-so-young adult who would rather do anything else but read?

What does ability to read offer that nothing else can offer in the same way, nor so easily, efficiently, and effectively? What advantages does reading offer over other means of communication, whether for recreation or information?

Foremost in answer to those questions is the economy of options that reading affords. For how many purposes and topics does any other ability provide the variety, inexpensiveness, ease, accessibility, portability, permanence, certainty, mystique that ability to read provides? Cheap, plentiful, priceless, rare, so many options are available in print to satisfy both individual and group needs that no other technique of communication can possibly compete. Whether specific interests and bodies of knowledge are held privately or shared in common with others, reading offers access to their introduction, exploration, expansion.

And, it does so at the reader's convenience. The "schedules" of bookstores, libraries, and newsstands are far more open and yielding to individual need and idiosyncracy than any television programming or computer time-sharing plan can ever be.

Once book, magazine, newspaper, tract is well in hand, one has only to turn it over to end its message, turn it once again to start all over or proceed from where one left off, minutes later, days later, years later, never again.

No other means of communication, no other language activity offers such variety, such a wide range of topics, interests, purposes so inexpensively, with such easy access and unyielding efficiency of use. No other means of communication is comparable in scope, none so commonly recognized and used. A single television show might be seen by tens or hundreds of millions, but consider the severity of selection available to those hundreds of millions of viewers, the loss of individual, moment by moment choice in certainty, permanence,

portability, mystique. Compare that severity and loss with the abundance and benefits of the thousands of titles burgeoning on bookstore shelves and library stacks.

If you would motivate others to read, why not face candidly but confidently those advantages that reading has always offered and that it still retains? Discard just as candidly those "reasons" for reading that have been superseded by whatever other means of communication. Whatever the age of the reader, what are the most appropriate uses of reading, those uses for which there is no substitute? Which purposes are met only with the certainty, permanence, accessibility, portability, mystique, economy of the printed page?

There is as much a message here for those "communication decision-makers" in our society as for ordinary, everyday readers and motivators of readers. Why spend energy and resources on purposes and products in reading that are no longer so valid as they once were?

Unquestionably other techniques of communication have superseded or replaced the printed page for specific purposes and uses. News headlines are undeniably delivered to more people faster by electronics than by ink on paper. That fact neither renders newspapers obsolete nor consigns reading only to paper and ink. Lettered captions often skip across the bottom of a television screen. Those of us who opt for more reflection, introspection, curiosity than radio and television budgets and schedules allow seek the self-appointed time and pace that print provides each one of us to choose.

Why breathe life into fossils? The changing shape of literacy demands an ever-shifting point of view. One of the advantages of reading, after all, is the ease with which you can take it up and put it down—even after years, if you choose—ignoring a given piece altogether until specific quest, specific text, specific moment come together in your life. Why deny an even greater range of choice by assuming that other means of communication will be the death of reading? Why assume that they are even in competition? They simply are not; they simply are different from each other.

To those who challenge the practice of reading for the possibility that it leads to a single style of thinking, one that is strictly linear and logical, page by page. I would counter that not even the most avid reader I have ever met insists that reading become the sole means of communication for anyone.

How do you make these arguments clear to a nonreader, especially to one who has not yet reached the age of reasoning, as we say? Can a preschooler or first or second grader begin to understand what portability, accessibility, option, mystique mean?

Certainly not in those words, as such. Perhaps not even if simpler language can be found to make the argument.

How, then?

In advice ascribed to Albert Schweitzer: example is not the best way; it is the only way.

To make reasons for reading understandable to whichever learner at whatever age, there can hardly be a better approach than serving as a role model. Believe the advantages of print yourself. Practice them. Consider their implications. Verbalize them to others. Share what you are reading. Share reasons why you are reading. Share moments, situations, your own motives and responses, when you are reading.

Such "modelling," as many psychologists and educators call it, offers at least as much credibility and almost certainly more credibility, than all the telling and "teaching" you can ever do. Believe, then go and do likewise.

Reading remains unique in so many of its fundamentally historical uses and characteristics—its certainty, permanence, portability, mystique, and, more than ever before in history, its variety and economy! They are its chief argument in motivating people to read.

Why read? Why reading? Why read this book you are now reading?

The specific motivation for reading a page of print can vary from person to person, page to page, moment to moment, mood to mood, reason to no reason at all. Motivation to read is as diverse as there are unlimited readers, limitless print, moveable goals, endless quests.

All made possible (in English, at least) through twenty-six characters called an alphabet and a handful of punctuation marks.

But, that observation leads us to concepts of language, a subject large enough for consideration on its own.

## We talk, we act, we are—we read

Reading does not begin with a page of print, nor even with an alphabet. It begins in the life of the reader and the life of the writer. To read well, you bring meaning to a page of print as well as take meaning from it. Some of that meaning comes from what you have experienced—tasted, smelled, heard, touched, seen—some from what you have thought or felt emotionally. Some of it comes from the mind and feelings and experiences of whoever wrote the words and sentences you are reading.

There is little argument that print on a page is in itself quite meaningless. At its best, of course, it conveys meaning from author to reader, but whatever meaning it conveys takes place in the mind of the reader, not on the page of print. Meaning resides at least as much within the listener or reader as it does within the words of the speaker or writer.

If the text has been clearly written, if it is appropriate to the reader, if it has been written in a language that the reader understands, and if the reader has shared enough experiences similar to those of the author, the meaning that the printed message calls to the mind of the reader is quite similar to the meaning the author had in mind when the text was written.

On the other hand, if the text has been poorly written, if the reader is for whatever reasons incapable of reading it, or if the experiences of reader and author have been so different from each other that they have little or nothing in common between them, the print on the page may drastically miscommunicate or communicate nothing at all.

While words, sentences, alphabetic characters are the basic symbols of reading, they are meaningless in themselves. As reading goes, unless they make sense to you as a reader in the context of your experiences and your abilities to unlock the meanings behind those symbols, they are unreadable.

Eventually, of course, you learn from reading, for what you read also becomes part of your experience. But to a very real extent in learning to read and in the reading you do for the rest

of your life, recognizing words is only a first step in the *process* of reading. Reading is far more complex than simply calling out those words from a page.

At the moment they are written down, for instance, words hold certain meanings to the writer. Do they have more or less the same meanings to you at the moment you are reading them?

How well can you understand the ideas behind the words? Can you infer meaning that a writer intends but does not spell out, so to speak? Can you recognize and interpret figurative language? How easily do you appreciate the fact that someone who says, "A rolling stone gathers no moss" is most likely talking about neither stones nor moss, but about action as a way of life?

Meaning in any given sentence is not the sum total of the dictionary meanings of the words in that sentence. Contexts, both linguistic and social, the backgrounds and experiences of individual readers and writers, their moods at the moment of reading or writing or the moment of original experience—all these factors and more determine the meaning of what is read as well as the ability to read.

How do the intent and purpose and motivation of the reader—or of the writer—influence the meaning of what is read? If we read that the eight-ounce glass contains four ounces of water, is it half-full, or half-empty? Is either fact good or bad? What if we were reading of bourbon, or ginger ale, or milk, or cyanide instead of water?

Bringing value judgments to what we read, agreeing or disagreeing with what an author says, determining the author's intent and credibility—these require our bringing meaning to and taking meaning from a page in ways far more sophisticated than simply recognizing that the word *dog* represents something most of us accept as a common animal often used as a house pet.

Conventions, patterns, and characteristics of the language itself can shape that meaning as substantially as can the

experiences of the reader and the writer. What role does connotation play—the suggested differences in meaning, purpose, and effect, for instance, of *terrier* rather than *dog*, of *dog* rather than *mutt*, of *mutt* rather than *mongrel*?

And, we have yet to begin to explore the fact that understanding words and sentences is often triggered not by the dictionary meanings of words, but by such voice signals as emphasis, pitch, and flow in words as they are "heard" by the person who reads them: "You're here!" "You're *here*?" "*You're* here?" "Your hearing is bad." Scholars refer to these characteristics of language as *stress*, *pitch*, and *juncture*.

We have yet to consider the influence of syntax and context on meaning, as in the differences in how the word *bill* is used in the following sentences: "Please bill the amount." "Bill the carpenter for the nails." "Bill, the carpenter, asked for tenpenny nails." "Your bill is on its way." "Your Bill is on his way."

We have yet to explore the curious fact that some of our most important words defy definition by dictionary meaning. What is the meaning of *by*, *no*, *of*, *the*, *is*, *a*, *in*, *for*, or *what*? Yet, how necessary those words are in understanding the sentence, "By no stretch of the imagination is a summary of definitions in a dictionary a substitute for what a sentence means."

Reading and experience—inseparable one from the other, varied, changeable, complex.

I have little patience with those who say that writing is an active use of the language, while reading is passive. Both are active—period!

To understand and appreciate how reading is taught and how it probably is learned is to realize that the page of print brings the two together—human experience and language development—like few other phenomena, both in the lives of individuals and in the common experience of humanity at large. Experiences and abilities that are uniquely your own as an individual put you in direct communication with every other human being who has ever lived—through reading!

And, all the communication, all the transfer of meaning that language makes possible, depend on the similarities between, first, the lives we have lived, the experiences we have accrued, and the patterns of language we have used, and, second, the lives and experiences and language patterns of those whose words we listen to or read.

## Psycholinguistics: language as human behavior

Probably no other two specialties have so influenced the teaching of reading in this century of American schooling as psychology and linguistics. Indeed, they have spawned a hybrid specialty, psycholinguistics—the science or study of how people process language, of how language works in human communication.

Linguistics is a very recent science—probably little more than a century old, though it is always difficult to say exactly when a given science was founded. We do know that the first formal dictionary in English was compiled by the eighteenth century scholar and writer, Samuel Johnson. The first American dictionary, Noah Webster's, followed in the early nineteenth century. Those dictionaries are important to the present discussion primarily because they represent attempts to track the language, to describe at least the meanings, spellings, and uses of words in English in a formal and comprehensive manner.

While Johnson and Webster are known as lexicographers for their work with dictionaries rather than as linguists, the science of linguistics developed somewhat logically in similar attempts to study and describe language as rationally as possible. Some linguists specialize in grammar as the cement that holds language together. Others in semantics, the study of how words take on meaning. Still others in the history of language, its differences from social class to social class, its dialects, its structures or frameworks. Some ask what makes a word a word, a sentence a sentence, and how words and sentences interact with each other. Kinesics is the study of how gestures and movements communicate—body language. On and on.

Psychology, the science of human behavior, developed during a period roughly parallel to that of the growth of linguistics. Far more familiar in our popular culture than linguistics, its contributions to reading instruction in our schools have included techniques of instruction and development of materials, as well as patterns for conceptualizing and studying the process of reading.

Standardized testing, placement and grouping of individual students for specific instruction, the separate identification of three distinct "domains" of learning involved in the reading

process—cognitive (knowing), affective (emotional), and psychomotor (physical, neurological)—have been introduced into school programs primarily through psychology's influence on educators. That influence has produced learning theories known as association (of "my dog Rover" with the word *dog*, for instance), of transfer (recognizing that the word *dog* can be used in different ways with different meanings), and of generalization (recognizing that *dog* also represents an idea beyond the physical experience of a four-legged furry creature known at home as Rover and kept as a pet).

Similar influence has led educators to distinguish word recognition skills (the fact that *bid* should not be pronounced the same as *bud*, for instance) from comprehension skills (the fact that the two different sounds mean altogether different things). They have noted the importance of such skills as visual and auditory discrimination (ability to distinguish fine differences among what is seen or heard). They have defined and explored stages of development and ranges of achievement among learners of similar age and training. And they have developed concepts of developmental, corrective, and remedial reading, depending on how well individuals read according to their basic potentials and how they might best be taught to read.

## Reading: an individual's act

Yet, no matter how much common ground psycholinguists have described about the process of reading, so long as language development is based in part on the separate experiences of individual human beings, language varies and changes as those experiences are different one from the other, moment to moment, person to person. Indeed, it is partly because of the study of language and behavior that we know that whatever experience we share in common as human beings, the meaning of the word *dog* is at least slightly different for every person who reads it. And for every person it is different every time it is read.

No one learns language solely nor even primarily through rules spelled out in classrooms. You learn language through your ability to listen, and subsequently through your ability to associate combinations of sounds—"words"—with specific meanings, to recognize that sounds can represent actions or things or ideas, and, sooner or later, that squiggly lines can represent similar actions or things or ideas. Those acts of recog-

nition are the psychological processes of association, transfer, and generalization.

You do not learn most of your language in school. You learn it in every moment of your life—more often than not unconsciously. And, while the entire learning process requires a social context, while you need other people around you to make the sounds and write or print the squiggles, to bring meaning to the page, and to help you develop the process of reading well, you are at last all alone in the reading. The message is yours alone, distinctively yours as an individual.

You can bring to the page only your own experiences with life and language; the meaning you take from that page depends in full measure on what you bring to it.

Reading by definition is a very private matter, as private as your own thoughts, even if you choose to try to share it with others.

## Elements of language development

We are not born with the ability to read—obviously not. Neither are we born with the ability to speak—that is, to make a wide range of coherent sounds that communicate complex thoughts to those around us.

And writing is all but impossible for us as individuals at least until we develop those motor skills that enable us to manipulate pencils or crayons across a sheet of paper (or a dining room wall!).

Listening?

Well, we cannot be sure when the ability to listen develops. Hearing normally develops quite early in life—probably at birth, and some are willing to say before birth. But listening? That is, hearing with purpose and meaning? Recognizing that some of the sounds we hear represent things or ideas other than the simple vibrations of vocal cords and air currents?

Development of that kind of ability to listen—to hear meanings and messages rather than just sounds—is probably a different story from simply being able to hear. And few of us are willing to say exactly when it begins in an individual's life.

But, at the beginning of reading instruction, when you first learn to read, we can tell however vaguely and however partially a great deal about the experiences, the abilities, the prior use of language you bring to the page of print. What have you seen or done or heard? What kind of life have you had?

What kind of language has been spoken around you? About what kinds of topics? For what purposes? With what attitudes? With what structural complexity? How many different words and concepts? In complete sentences or mostly in grunts and gestures?

Those are apparently some of the primary questions in determining your ability to learn to read competently and early.

To understand and appreciate how reading is taught and how it probably is learned is first to understand how language develops in the individual human being. That goes along with the notion that human beings tend to develop and behave in certain psychological and social patterns.

As already noted, reading is only one of several ways by which we use language. We also use language when we speak, listen, or write, and certainly all of us think in words and phrases and sentences, or something akin to them, much of the time. The process of learning and using those four or five language activities has been described logically as the basis of language development.

Some consider it a sequence. Initially at least, we experience the fact before we recognize, through listening, the sound that represents that fact. We must be able to recognize that sound before we can repeat it ourselves, and thus "say the word." We probably cannot read the word before we have it roughly, at least, in our spoken vocabulary. We are not very likely to write the word before we have heard it and read it with meaning.

Eventually, of course, most of us learn to read words that we cannot recall ever having heard. We can develop separate sight vocabularies that occasionally transcend our oral/aural vocabularies. For years, I myself recognized in my reading a meaning for the word *misled* (which I had always assumed would have been pronounced *MIZZuld*, if I had needed to read it aloud). Suddenly one day I realized that it was the same word I had heard for years as *missLED*.

But, basic patterns of development among the four language activities stand quite logically. Patterns hold not just for learning our basic vocabularies—not just for recognizing what words and sentences mean. They hold for learning the sound patterns and other signals—the grammar, syntax, word order, vowel and consonant combinations—by which language works for us.

Of course no preschooler calls a noun a *noun*, a subordinate clause a *subordinate clause*, nor a consonant a *consonant*. But, unless that preschooler hears the difference between vowels and consonants in proper patterns and sequences, "words" will seem garbled indeed. *Dog* could become *dgo* or *gdo* or *god* or *ogd* or *odg* or any of an endless string of meaningless sounds or sounds that mean something other than *dog*.

So, too, does the preschooler learn to recognize that certain kinds of words are normally used at certain positions in sentences and never or rarely in certain other positions, that *My dog is happy* conveys meaning while *dog my happy is* is likely to communicate not at all, or at best very, very poorly. The structures of language are learned through experience, too.

## Reading: a social phenomenon

To understand and appreciate how reading is taught and how it probably is learned is also to recognize how language develops as a social system, as a process of communication at work among human beings generally.

At this point in civilization, language certainly has shaped our experiences as a society, as a human race, as well as individually. And reading has played a major role in that fact because it allows us to transcend time and place with such certainty, permanence, portability, and mystique. Rules for living, recipes, treaties, great works of literature, historical documents, personal diaries, family records—how different our lives would be without them, individually and as a race of beings.

While the acquisition of language and eventually the ability to read can be learned only by individuals according to their own individual experiences and abilities, language is remarkably group-oriented and social as a pattern or characteristic of human behavior. It is all but inconceivable that we could develop our own private, individual languages. The severe limitation that would result! A major defeat, a denial of the only purpose for language—to communicate with other human beings!

Almost by definition, any social activity is acquired learning, not innate. That fact is undeniably true of reading. Environmental factors are apparently far more important than heredity in learning to read. Of course heredity plays its role to whatever extent genes transmit basic intelligence and

the ability to learn anything at all. Beyond that, reading is an acquired ability. Experience, environment are vitally important, even crucial to developing that ability.

The science of human behavior is based entirely on observations of individual and group experiences. Reading is only one of several ways in which we use language. And language, in turn, is only one area, one function, one characteristic of human behavior.

## Nature of language

Reading, then, is a social phenomenon that can be learned only by each of us as individuals, based on our own individual experiences. It merges the experiences of reader and writer and the rest of humankind through artificial means—the alphabetic symbols that we have come to call words, phrases, sentences, parables, truth. None of those words or sentences means anything at all until meaning is read into them by both writer and reader. The meaning—that is, the experience or thought or idea or thing represented by the symbols—must be recognized and shared to some extent by both writer and reader.

So, too, must the characteristics of a common symbol system, the structure of language, be internalized and recognized, whether consciously or not, by both reader and writer before communication can take place between them through the printed page.

Print serves simply as a vehicle, as a meeting place for both reader and writer to bring meaning to and take meaning from that page. Making such sense of a written or printed message is the heart of reading.

No doubt about it. Language can be codified. It has complex rules and structures of its own. It is logical, systematic, even though we can use it in illogical ways for illogical purposes. And those rules are far more extensive and complex than most teachers and other interested adults begin to realize, even some of those who pride themselves on being strict "grammarians."

English can be described by any of several different grammars or structural systems: one based on Latin models, another on Germanic, still another on linguistic principles.

Within the scientific approach of linguistics itself, several different systems are available to describe how the language works: one called *generative*, one *transformational*, and so forth. Each has played a lesser or greater role in determining how reading

should or should not be taught, according to one expert or another.

Ironically, Johnson and others systematically began to describe the language partly for reasons and in an attempt that proved futile, to a great extent. Its failure has been well-documented by the very science of language toward which their efforts eventually led in English.

Briefly, they hoped to define the English language once and for all, to keep it from shifting around so much in vocabulary and structure and spelling and punctuation. How else would future generations be able to read and understand the great works that had been produced in the English language up to and including their own day?

Their goal of stabilization has never been realized, for language is in constant change, a state of flux. There are few absolute and unchanging rules that govern language. You can steady the language, perhaps, and count on enough stability to codify a system of rules that will work at least for some purposes for a certain period of time.

But with it all, the language continues to change even as life continues from moment to moment. New words for new experiences: *cybernetics, DNA, jazz.* New meanings for old words: *space shuttle, rock and roll, heart transplant.* Familiar words fade from use or lose their meanings: *vapors, rheumy, motorman.* New structural uses for old words: "Will you carbon me?" "I can special order it for you." "I copy loud and clear."

There are many ways by which experience shapes language, both in the lives of individuals and among humans generally. At this point in the development of language, there are also many ways by which language shapes experience.

## *Dog*'s life as language

At the simplest level, consider the word *dog.* According to the general theory of language development, a youngster is not likely to bring meaning to that word in print until the youngster has heard the word, and has associated the sound of the word with the kind of animal all of us recognize as a dog.

So far so good. However, language becomes a complex system very quickly, even with so simple a word as *dog.*

Exactly what experiences with a dog or dogs does that youngster bring to the word? A cuddly puppy who licks your nose? A barking, snapping beast who threatens you when you

walk by a certain gate? A big, shaggy Saint Bernard? A small, tightly cropped poodle? A total of five dogs in the entire experience? Five hundred dogs, all of them pretty much alike? Five hundred dogs, all of them pretty much different from each other?

We could fill books with a catalog of the many, many separate experiences one youngster might possibly have had before first seeing—and bringing meaning to—the word *dog*. We would need to include also the experiences with the systems of sound and grammar and spelling and intonation and all the other elements of language that enable it to work in similar ways for so many people, including the youngster who reads the word *dog* and the writer who wrote it.

But, we would then be on our way to understanding only one small part of the story of what it is to read the word *dog* and how that reading takes place. We would need to investigate the entire meaning—that is, the lifelong experience with dogs—that the writer brought to the word. Then, to analyze and understand thoroughly, we should properly consider those definitions of *dog* that have been generally accepted by most people who bring any meaning at all to the word, the kinds of meanings or definitions that show up in dictionaries.

Beyond that, there is the linguistic fact that all these experiences can change for each of us individually from moment to moment, and for all of us as a language group. The dog that snuggles up to us tonight can change our personal meaning of the word *dog* from the meaning we held yesterday after having been bitten by a stray. Indeed, we learn early that we can carry around lots of different meanings for the same word.

Very early in our experience with the word *dog* we realize that it has linguistic variations: *dogs, DOG!, doggy, doggier, puppy dog, hunting dog, house dog, doggone, dog-tired.* It shows up in different forms, different contexts, with different connotations for different people and in different circumstances.

Fill up another book or two with all the possibilities.

Eventually, we become sophisticated enough in our use of language that, yes, the language begins to shape our experience. "You dog, you!" "I'll dog you to death!" "Wow, what a dog that friend of yours is!" Such words shape our experience, influence our attitudes, our feelings, our thoughts. They make us feel good or bad, depending on how they are delivered, lightly or seriously, by someone we like or by someone

we dislike, at a moment when we are in a good mood or a bad mood.

We can even become so skillful with the structural conventions and capabilities of language that we put disparate elements of it together and invent our own words: *dogdom*, from *kingdom, freedom, boredom*, and the rest.

Another bookful of possibilities!

## Practical implications for learning and teaching to read

As reading is taught, and probably as it is learned as well, the sequence of language development is a most important theory, one commonly recognized by almost every teacher of reading in America. Beyond that fact, divergent points of view hold sway about applying the theory, each point of view supported by its own accumulation of evidence and argument, each carrying its own burden of proof.

Which comes first, language or thought? Thought or experience? The patterns and structures of language or the meaning that they help to convey? Form or content? Philosophical questions? Yes. And, while they have been addressed by a handful of scholars through rigorous scientific inquiry, they remain basically questions of academic debate. Their answers are more often matters of faith and fundamental argument than widely acknowledged fact.

They are not quite so imponderable as the question of the chicken or the egg, but the various answers that diverge from asking which comes first, language or thought, thought or experience, structure or sense, lead to rather fundamental differences from teacher to teacher, classroom to classroom, method to method, in how reading is taught.

Experience, listening, speaking, reading, writing: those are basic elements or activities in language development, theory that underlies much of the instruction in reading in American schools. Some scholars argue over their relative importance and sequence. Some even question their validity and usefulness as theory and their accuracy as an explanation of how individuals develop language ability. Instructional methods and materials represent many variations in applying the four basic language activities.

Some scholars believe that youngsters should be encouraged to write as they learn to read, or even to write *before they read*,

if not simultaneously.

But everyone who specializes in the teaching of reading recognizes patterns in the elements of language development. Those elements are a basic concept in teaching to read and, if theory holds true, in learning to read.

The definition of reading as bringing meaning to and taking meaning from the page is one I first heard from Leland Jacobs.

Whatever our motivation for reading—for recreation, for information, for learning to read—reading remains always a means to other ends, not an end in itself. After all else has been said about it, reading is simply an invented device, a method of communication, still and always under development. It is the lives of readers and writers--their interests, backgrounds, beliefs, motives, thoughts, knowledge—that make the effort worth the while and that bring meaning to whatever is read, and purpose to the act of reading.

However language develops in the human race, it is the primary ability that sets us apart from all other creatures. Rather than argue which comes first, language or experience, I will settle pragmatically for the fact that language enables us to practice and cherish our humanity like few other capabilities. The phenomenon of reading contributes vitally to that capability.

What is the best way to introduce and nurture that phenomenon in others? We can describe ways. If only we knew for sure which is best.

But, that is a topic that deserves its own consideration, one that follows on the next page.

# Whole cloth and silver threads

Whatever you may hear or read from various psychologists, linguists, educators, public critics, it remains true that we know much, much more about how reading is taught than about how it is learned. The teaching of reading by whatever technique or approach is almost always based on one variation or another of our concepts of how language is acquired and develops, both within individuals and among societies generally. Those concepts, however plausible, remain just that—somewhat theoretical concepts.

We know that reading is an invented and thus an artificial method of conveying meaning and sharing experience from life to life and across centuries and civilizations. If you were not as an individual somehow taught to read, even indirectly by imitating those around you, you would probably never develop on your own a system of communication called reading—at least not so complex a system as reading now represents at this stage in the development of our civilization. Nor could most of us learn to read on our own so easily as we can through systematic instruction.

Our theories of language acquisition and of the process of reading make so much logical sense; we have become so accustomed to them that few of us can dream of rational alternatives. Because of what we *believe*, it takes a stubborn will to bring us back to what we *know*. The truth is that we know much, much more about the processes of how reading is taught than we know about how it is learned.

If we had truly mastered the knowledge of how it is learned, we would understand more clearly why some few do not learn to read, or cannot learn to read, and why it is apparently inevitable that even given the same instruction, some learn better than others "how to read."

The tremendous spread of reading abilities within any given age group is an indication that we know more about how reading is taught than about how it is learned. Why is it that two, twenty, or two hundred students can be taught essentially

the same program and come out reading with two or twenty or two hundred different levels of success? Yet, such results hold true to a disturbing degree even among students of similar intelligence and similar backgrounds.

Specialists have observed for years that the range of reading levels in a typical class will vary almost in direct proportion to the grade level of the class. The best readers in a typical fourth grade classroom will be reading on a sixth grade level—about four years ahead of the worst readers in their ability to read. The best readers in a tenth grade classroom will be about ten years ahead of the worst. The spread increases as the years go by, the best getting better, the poor readers falling proportionally further behind them.

Let us look, then, at how reading is taught, assuming that teaching methods and approaches have something to do with how people learn to read, even those who claim to have taught themselves to read.

## Top/down, bottom/up

In recent years, many of those who specialize in the teaching of reading have tended to categorize that instruction either as top/down or bottom/up. However whimsical or simplistic the labels may seem, they reflect two basic but contrasting attitudes or beliefs with which teachers and programs approach the teaching of reading.

To a great extent, the two parallel—if they do not echo—basic differences in accepting, rejecting, or interpreting theories of language acquisition and philosophies of human development and behavior. More certainly, they represent two fundamentally different beliefs about how most effectively to teach individuals how to read.

As we have noted, language is made up of complex but systematic linguistic patterns and many, many words and phrases which trigger meanings. Together, the linguistic signals and the words or symbols they help deliver make communication possible between writer and reader through the printed page.

And, the reader obviously needs certain skills by which to make sense of that symbol system we call print on a page. Not just backgrounds of experience, but skills—the ability to move eyes from left to right and top to bottom, for instance, and to do so not just letter by letter nor word by word, but in two or three

jumps a line, making sense of squiggles of ink. Skills like recognizing the subtle differences in squiggle between *bud* and *dub*, or *bud* and *bad* and *bed* and *bid*. Skills like knowing what happens to a word like *quit* when you add an *e* to it, or *diner* when you double the *n*.

A top/down model of teaching reading tends to begin with the belief that teaching should build primarily on the knowledge and experiences that already exist in the mind of the learner. It builds on the observation that by the age of three or four—five or six at the latest—a child of normal intelligence and typical experience has mastered most of the signals in language by which meaning is triggered, that the child speaks and listens in sentence patterns far more complicated than most of those described in high school grammar handbooks. It implies that language and life are relatively unified and complete within an individual, even though they are in endless development as that individual continues to grow physically, emotionally, intellectually.

Such a holistic attitude assumes that the life of the learner, the language which that learner has already mastered, and the entire process of reading are much more complex and extensive than any teacher or any other adult is likely to be able to explore and explain thoroughly, especially when that teacher is normally responsible for at least twenty-five or thirty such learners in a finite number of minutes per day and days per school year.

Top/down advocates therefore tend to believe that encouraging the learner's exploration of language and experience will in turn lead that learner to recognize and use the many, many structures and patterns which make language work and the many, many meanings that language can communicate.

Top/down teachers recognize the array of linguistic and psychological skills and patterns and rules that apparently come into play in the process of reading and learning to read. However, they are not as likely as bottom/up teachers to label those skills and rules and teach them per se unless and until it seems useful to do so to help a learner over a specific hurdle or problem.

In other words, they try to relate skills and patterns and rules of the text at hand to the language and experiences of the learner, especially when doing so will help that learner make

better sense of whatever language the learner has already basically mastered or is manipulating for the first time.

A bottom/up model of teaching reading, by contrast, tends to begin with the belief that teaching should build primarily on the various skills and elements by which language operates. While it recognizes that language and life are relatively unified and somewhat complete though in continual development within an individual, it implies that reading is best learned by the accumulation of phonic decoding controlled by the teacher or by the materials at hand. It makes regular use of systematic presentation and exercises in the various subskills and structures of language by which the text can be deciphered.

Such an atomistic attitude assumes that whatever the life of the learner, whatever language the learner may already have internalized and used, the process of reading can be taught most effectively if every learner in a class masters the necessary subskills, patterns of language, and transcription of sounds for decoding print in general.

Bottom/up advocates also tend to believe that requiring the learner to recognize and master the many, many structures and patterns which make language work will eventually lead that learner to be able to decode and recognize the many, many messages that can be communicated through reading generally.

Bottom/up teachers not only recognize the many linguistic and pyschological skills and patterns and rules that definitely come into play in the process of reading and learning to read, they are likely to stress those elements and teach them as basic building blocks of reading ability.

Mastery of those skills and patterns and rules, bottom/up teachers tend to believe, is necessary not only to help a learner over any specific hurdle or problem in reading, but also to learn how to read generally. Bottom/up teachers introduce elements of the language to the learner especially as those skills and patterns and rules are pertinent to understanding text, whatever the learner's background.

## Eclectic teaching and learning

Very few good teachers of reading depend on either extreme exclusively. Most are somewhat eclectic in their teaching. That is, they recognize the best elements and implications of both approaches and try to use those techniques that will be most helpful to learners at the moment. Or, they make sure they

regularly employ techniques that reflect both approaches when they plan their lessons and gather the materials they will use during instruction.

Indeed, few of the major reading programs published for general use in the schools follow solely a top/down or a bottom/up approach. Most incorporate materials and exercises and suggestions for teaching that borrow from both.

Thus, my title for this section of *Learning to Read, Teaching to Read:* **Whole cloth and silver threads.** Arguments are endless about which is the better approach to the teaching of reading, about how an individual best learns to read—from top down, or from bottom up, as the terms take on special meaning in instruction. From a practical point of view, there is certainly at least a measure of truth in either basic approach. Neither should be followed to the exclusion of the other. Both offer useful techniques and ideas. Both represent valuable points of view.

Whether you view the processes of reading and learning to read as whole cloth, the whole cloth either of a reader's total experience or of reading as a global phenomenon—or as silver threads, the silver threads either in a reader's particular abilities and skills or in the nature and specific patterns of language, the two obviously are necessary to each other and equally valuable. One cannot have whole cloth without threads, nor are threads completely valuable until they are meshed into whole cloth.

Furthermore, arguments biased toward one or the other—top/down, bottom/up—so often seem to ignore or bypass the very basic motives for reading in the first place. They tend to detract from the fundamental truth that reading is not in itself its own ultimate goal. We teach and learn *to read*, of course, but we *read* for information, or entertainment, or enrichment, or any of a wide human assortment of specific purposes.

Granted, advocates of one or the other basic approach probably have in mind the question of which is the more efficient way to help someone learn to read. But, efficiency is very difficult to measure effectively when the processes—indeed, the very concept of reading—are so complex, diverse, and grand in scope as we know them to be.

Reading does not consist simply of an accumulation of skills and meanings. Neither is it a matter simply of you as reader exploring through common codes what already exists in your mind. Reading is both of those plus much more. The best reading

instruction seeks not only to sharpen skills, but to inform the mind and stimulate the imagination. At the same time, the best reading instruction not only seeks to broaden recognition of inner self and outer world, it also equips the learner with specific skills to interpret language eventually with help from no one else.

## Advocacy of either approach

However, there is no doubt that almost every major program and probably every teacher of reading in America leans at least slightly, and often quite heavily toward one or the other approach, whether consciously or unconsciously, obviously or subtly. A throughly eclectic approach requires extensive commitments in time, material, knowledge, even among those who understand and appreciate both top/down and bottom/up approaches. Few people can command and afford those commitments, especially in classrooms with many demands placed on them and severely finite time and resources alloted to them.

You can be rather sure that someone who advocates little but "phonics," "decoding," "word attack skills," or "word analysis" is probably working with a basically bottom/up orientation.

On the other hand, those heavily into "language experience," "miscue analysis," "whole language," or "augmented alphabet" are just as likely to be oriented to top/down teaching.

Of zealots on either side—indeed of zealots generally—I would advise us only to beware of false prophets. Speakers on behalf of one pressure group or another, one approach or another, demand spelling reform or a new alphabet or a return to phonics or a humanistic curriculum as *the* solution to whatever problems they see with America generally, and the so-called problems with reading instruction in particular.

I am sure that we as a nation have a reading problem so long as we have even a single citizen who cannot or does not read to fullest individual ability. I am sure we have a reading problem every time a piece of printed trash outsells a gem of printed treasure.

But, those are not the kinds of problems that pressure groups and zealots tend to target. More often than not, they attempt to sway our feelings and opinions about how reading is taught. Even if it were somehow proven true that reading is not taught well (a doubtful position, given the all but universal basic literacy

among Americans), supersimple solutions are just not available, whether you are top/down or bottom/up in your persuasion.

As we have already seen, language is shaped and print is read by individuals as well as by society at large. Individuals come in large, large numbers and infinite variety. Society is in a constant state of flux. The process of reading is far more complex than most of us realize. There are no absolute guarantees, no simplistic solutions to reading problems of any kind, either within individuals or within society at large. Neither is there any one method of teaching that can guarantee that everyone will learn to read to the same level of ability in the same period of time with the same materials and program of instruction.

## Development of approach

American schooling has been particularly susceptible to fads, and nothing succeeds in launching a fad better than the single-mindedness of zeal. Fad eventually loses zeal and begins to fade, but elements that it introduced remain and trend moves on.

The history of American reading instruction is a record of such development. It has been marked by a tendency for one generation to see probiems in the attitudes and approaches of previous generations and to solve them, even while adopting or retaining most of what has preceded in the name of "teaching to read."

The emphasis on common morality and practical content in McGuffey's nineteenth century readers gave too little attention to what early twentieth century psychologists and linguists came to recognize as patterns of language and psychological processes. Enter into American reading instruction such concepts as controlled vocabulary, basic sight words, reinforcement through repetition: "Look. Dick, look, look, look. See Jane. See Puff. See Sally. Run, Jane. Run, Puff. Run, Sally. Run, run, run!"

The severely limited vocabularies inherent in such material led to cries for greater emphasis on phonic analysis: *run, fun, gun, bun, sun, sunny, sunning, sunnier, sung, sing, song.* The impoverished content brought pleas for something more interesting to youngsters—and to the adults who taught them or listened to them read out loud.

But, the disparities and limitations in English of strict phonic analysis led in turn to cries for the use of "basic English" (only those words spelled "regularly" and commonly recognized by almost everyone who uses English), or for spelling reform.

The Initial Teaching Alphabet, which extends the regular alphabet to forty-four characters rather than twenty-six (one for each of the forty-four phonemes or singularly meaningful sounds in English), is one attempt in part to improve on previous generations of reading instruction by acknowledging the difficulties and imperfections of a "traditionally" phonic approach.

The use of rebuses or pictographs in text (I ♥ NY), or the practice of printing certain words in color both build on the fact that language draws on the far broader experiences we carry within us than the strictly verbal information we retain.

The extremely artificial, intellectual, analytical nature of most twentieth century "reforms" in reading instruction brings others to take a "language experience approach" in the teaching of reading, one that depends almost entirely on humanely discovering and exploring the language abilities and experiences that the individual learner already has internalized by whatever means.

All have been attempts to improve the teaching of reading, to bring it more closely in line with one or another theory of how individuals learn to read. All have been based on research, on logic, on reason, on results of empirical observation and experiment, as well as on fundamental theory.

All are valuable. All are in use to one extent or another in American classrooms. Each even serves as an important feature if not the core of reading instruction in one school or another.

However, none represents the single key to success in learning and teaching to read that its most zealous advocates would like to have us believe.

## Concepts held in common

No matter if you decide that you are fundamentally top/down or bottom/up in your attitudes and approaches to teaching and learning to read, certain technical concepts are shared rather universally by advocates from either side—that is, within teaching to read as a specialty in education. Such

concepts—perhaps "definitions" would be a better label—identify rather common tools and common goals in the teaching of reading.

Almost every teacher of reading distinguishes between *word recognition* and *comprehension*. Briefly, the distinction grows from the realization that being able to "sound out" a word that appears in print is not all that is involved in successful reading. Word recognition involves the skills and knowledge required to identify the certain combinations of letters and other characters on a page that represent particular words and sentences. Comprehension skills enable the reader to internalize the thoughts behind those words and sentences, and to manipulate them as thoughts and ideas.

Almost every teacher of reading identifies at least three levels of skill in comprehension: *literal, interpretive, critical.*

Literal comprehension is seen as the most elementary level in the process of reading. When you understand that the word *dog* approximates your experience with what a dog is and does in real life, you are at a literal understanding of the word.

Interpretive reading requires your comprehension of what you read beyond such a one-to-one literal pairing of word with concept. It requires your ability to see meanings beyond a literal level.

"To be a dog would be to live the best of all possible lives." Such a statement demands interpretation by the reader, though interpretation plays a role in reading far simpler statements and words as well. Why would being a dog be equal to living the best of all possible lives? How could that be true? What facts, what logic, what experiences could lead someone to make that statement? Does the word *dog* in that sentence represent something more than what I have in mind simply as the furry, four-legged creature that wags its tail and barks, or that sleeps on the mat by my door? Obviously, yes, it does mean more than that. Then, what additional meaning does the word *dog* carry in that statement?

Interpretive reading requires ability to *infer* meaning—to recognize, for instance, that the writer of the words *to be a dog* in the example just cited almost certainly intended you to think of *dog*, at least for the moment, as a concept greater than the particular, furry, four-legged animal lying by your door as you read in your favorite chair.

Inference, in turn, is often determined or influenced by the *context* in which a word or phrase or sentence appears—that is,

the language or situation that surrounds it. Certainly, the philosophical tone of the phrases *to be* and *to live the best of all possible lives* gives the normally simple word *dog* a context that reinforces our inference that the writer wants us to think of ideas far beyond the literal level of *dog* as a creature that barks, wags its tail, eats, and lies at our feet.

*Connotation*—the feelings and attitudes a word suggests beyond its "dictionary" meaning (or *denotation*)—is still a third element of language that plays a heavy role in interpreting what we read. Consider how different in meaning our example sentence would be if only one or two words were substituted within it, words with different connotations from the originals:

> "To be a mutt would be to live the best of all possible lives."
>
> "To be a dog would be to experience the best of all possible existences."
>
> "To be a dog would be the epitome of living."

Critical reading goes one step further than interpretive in drawing on your own experiences and judgments as a reader. Critical reading requires your literal understanding of what you read, your valid interpretation of that reading in light of the writer's intent, and your personal responses to it—responses based on the sense and sensibility you have developed in your own experiences with life.

"To be a dog would be to live the best of all possible lives." Oh, come now, you might respond. I know that you are equating a dog's life with a human's, or that you are at least drawing parallels between certain elements of both. But, after all, do you really believe that life as a dog is all that good, or that life as a human is all that bad?

To a great extent, the differences among literal, interpretive, and critical reading are differences of degree and complexity in how much meaning and experience you bring to and thus take from the printed page. The greater your range of experiences, the more varied they have been, the more numerous your opportunities for exercising judgments based on those experiences, the better are your chances for advancing from literal comprehension through interpretive to critical.

Teachers of reading also tend to recognize several different levels of ability to read within any given reader, especially in the early stages of learning to read: *independent, instructional, frustration,* and *capacity* or *potential.* Each can be defined rather specifically.

When you read at your independent level, you recognize almost 100% of the words you meet and you understand (or comprehend) virtually everything that you read—certainly at the literal level, and probably on inferential and critical levels as well. Reading at your independent level gives you no problems at all; rather, you read easily and well without help from anyone else.

At your instructional level, you understand no fewer than 95% of the words you read, but you comprehend as little as three-quarters of what you read. At this level, you obviously would benefit from outside help—that is, instruction that would help you both to decipher or recognize those words which you cannot figure out on your own, and to comprehend those ideas that you cannot get out of the text on your own.

Your frustration level puts you at just that—utter frustration with the reading at hand. You cannot recognize more than nine of every ten words you see in the text. Your comprehension falls to half or less of what is there to be read, even on a literal level. You fidget, your lips move as you try to decipher words, you point your fingers to the page, you avoid, you omit words, you scratch your head or twist your hair, you substitute words with or without logic and sense, you hate the task before you.

Your capacity or potential level is roughly equivalent to what you are capable of understanding if someone tells you something or reads material to you. That is, you need worry not at all about your ability to read—to decode print—since you are not required to read. Rather, you simply listen, and you listen comprehending at least 75% of what you hear.

All four levels are typically described in terms of "grade levels" roughly equivalent to what would be expected of an average student in whichever grade. A seven-year-old might be reading independently at second grade level, instructionally at third grade level, frustrationally at fifth grade level, and potentially at sixth grade level. Obviously, all levels change as individuals continue to improve their reading ability and as they mature and expand their experiences in the normal course of living.

Theoretically, the difference between your independent level

and your capacity level is the distance between your present ability to read and your potential ability to read at the time at which the levels are determined. Theoretically, your instructional level is the one at which you can most efficiently be taught to read better than you already can. Your frustration level is one that should be avoided in practice and instruction at all costs!

At any stage of your life, at any point in your personal development as a reader, you probably carry several, if not all four, of these separate levels of ability to read. Learning to read is not limited only to the first two or three years of schooling. Given the complexity and range of what there is to be read in the world, it is a lifelong opportunity.

Good teachers of reading also recognize huge differences between *reading silently* and *reading aloud*. At whatever stage of life or of learning to read, you should never be expected to read aloud any material that you have not been given the opportunity to read silently first. There is enough potential anxiety in reading of any kind. Why compound it with the additional anxiety of public performance—which reading aloud to someone else inevitably becomes, even if your audience consists only of one teacher, one parent, one babysitter, one uncle or aunt?

Some think silent reading is faster than reading aloud. If you "subvocalize" when you read silently—that is, continue to go through the motions of "reading aloud" with lips, jaws, and tongue—you are probably having some trouble reading the material at hand and returning to a strategy that helps you concentrate, as when you first learned to read.

Teachers of reading tend, too, to differentiate kinds of reading according to purpose. Thus, *functional reading* is that which is necessary to function in ordinary life: stop signs and catalogs through mortgage agreements and insurance policies. *Recreational reading*, of course, implies reading for pleasure or entertainment—novels, short stories, joke books, commentaries. *Informational reading* includes business reports, most news articles, how-to-do-it pieces.

Teachers of reading tend to agree that there are stages of *readiness* to read that must ideally be mastered in everyone before reading or learning to read can be fruitful and satisfying.

At preschool and elementary levels, readiness includes such skills as the ability to tell the differences in sounds that various

letters will represent when you actually begin to meet them in print; the differences in shape among various letters, especially such similar shapes as "d" and "b," "p" and "q," "b" and "p;" differences in direction, such as your eyes will need to follow when you begin to read—left to right, line by line, top to bottom; your background of experience, both with language and with life in general, that you are able to bring to reading.

At more advanced levels of schooling, readiness for reading a particular passage or chapter ideally includes such devices as "advance organizers" or "structured overviews"—introduction of new or unfamiliar words that will be met in the passage; questions to stimulate appropriate knowledge or interest you probably already hold in relationship to the passage at hand; strategies that will help you read the material successfully; some notion of how the material is organized and presented.

Readiness is far more intricate and complex than I have indicated in these two brief paragraphs. Books have been written on it as a topic unto itself. In general, however, even though the term *readiness* usually brings to mind the kinds of skill and exercise described here for preschool and elementary levels, readiness is a concept held by all good teachers of reading, a concept that recognizes the help that every learner should at least be offered before being asked to read a particular assignment or selection.

## Individual differences—a common problem

Finally, virtually every teacher of reading, top/down or bottom/up, knows that it is essential to recognize a wide range of abilities, potentials, and achievements within any group of individuals at any age. Accommodating such *individual differences* among learners, however, is one of the most difficult challenges in trying to teach classrooms full of learners at whatever age to read or to develop and improve their reading.

Personally, I have always been bemused, indeed fascinated, by the fact that while differences among us as individuals are universally recognized and even treasured in some of our institutions and customs and attitudes, they are a source of panic in others. While we might like to dress, or comb our hair, or listen to music, or dine in styles that we share with others, few of us want to be exactly like anyone else in any way whatsoever. Furthermore, no two of us look or sound or see or

hear exactly alike—not even identical twins.

We do not push through our first teeth at precisely the same moments in our respective lives. We grow to different heights in different spurts at different paces. We speak different first words at different points in our individual lives. None of us can possibly live another person's life, crawl inside the skin, inhabit the mind, taste exactly the same foods in exactly the same way, be motivated to the same extent in the same way about the same things—*accumulate the same experiences*, to return to a concept we considered within the sequence of language development earlier in this book.

Yet, we insist that our youngsters be treated quite thoroughly as groups when it comes to teaching and learning to read. Rather, let me say that we become distressed and frustrated if one youngster seems to learn a consonant blend or the differences between long vowels and short vowels somewhat later than another youngster in the same class in school. Conversely, we take great pride in the "outstanding accomplishment" of that youngster who learns the same consonant blend or the differences between long vowels and short vowels a month or two before any other individual in the class—*even though the individuals in that class might vary in age alone by almost a year*!

And age is only one of an infinite number of ways in which we differ from each other, the differences growing greater and greater as our years go by. We do not similarly fret about two forty-year-olds over the specific dates on which they respectively first demonstrate the development of wisdom, or their separate abilities to read, understand and enjoy every word of *Moby Dick*.

At any rate, no matter how much sermonizing I might like to do on the point, it remains true that differences among individuals are a fact of life. It is equally true that trying to identify and work constructively with groups of individuals who are so naturally and complexly different from each other is one of the major challenges of American schooling as it has long been organized in grade levels strictly defined by chronological age—or by accident of birth, as I like to say. The challenge is all the more problematic in the teaching of such an intricate process as reading.

Some like to believe that the one-room school of rural yesterday was probably more conducive to meeting individual differences than the contemporary system of trying to teach

hundreds or thousands per school district. Not because teachers in one-room schools were better prepared than contemporary teachers. They were not. And, not because youngsters were any brighter or materials any better. They were not.

More than likely, if the one-room school was more conducive to meeting individual differences, it was because the individual differences inherent in twenty to thirty youngsters ranging in age from five or six to thirteen or fourteen brought such a variety of ability and experience and motivation and background into a small, closely defined social and physical context that potential resources for meeting individual differences among students was multiplied exponentially. What you did not or could not learn from a single textbook or a single teacher you could learn from someone else in the broad collection of individuals that made up the school.

But, granted, I deal with speculation in that point. The typical contemporary teacher of reading deals with twenty-five to thirty-five learners per classroom. One of the few things they share in common is the accident of birth that places them within a year of each other in chronological age.

Realizing that wide ranges of difference exist naturally among those learners, many teachers of reading choose at whatever level of schooling to offer different materials covering or exercising different topics or skills to different students at different times.

However, such extreme individualization becomes a nightmare of administration—that is, of keeping track of materials and students individually and planning individual programs from day to day. Thus, especially in primary grades, many teachers of reading divide their classes into "reading groups"—three seems to be the most common number of groups per class.

Those groups generally represent students who cluster at different levels of ability or achievement in whatever approach to reading instruction the teacher is taking. Some teachers, however, group according to specific interests that students exhibit, or to specific tasks at hand, or according to any of a number of other criteria. Some teachers even group and regroup students as purposes and abilities shift and change and develop among individual students as the school year moves along.

Whether top/down or bottom/up in general persuasion, teachers of reading tend to try to accommodate the differences

among the individuals in their classes as much as they can. Keeping a variety of materials at hand and grouping are two of the most common techniques for doing so.

## Practical differences in approach

At the risk of oversimplication, then, it can be said that top/down teaching is likely to stress topics, motivation, and abilities that are intrinsic to or "within" both individual learners and materials at hand. It will seek to make instruction as immediately rewarding and pleasurable as possible, especially as such reward and pleasure are inherent for the student in the material being read as whole stories.

Classroom library corners, story hours, visits to libraries, individual borrowing of books and magazines and other reading materials, sharing different stories with each other are seen by top/down teachers not just as supplements to reading instruction, but as some of its central features. Field trips, show-and-tell sessions, group discussions become sources for reading and for original writing by learners. Personal journals, reports, descriptions, stories, poems—most of them different from each other and produced by students themselves—join commercially available materials for instruction as well as enjoyment.

Such exploitation of self-discovery and the internal orientation of top/down teaching lead to testing and evaluation in relatively personal, subjective, qualitative terms. If carried to extremes, it leads to measuring a student's ability to read solely against that student's own abilities and experiences. Few schools and few teachers, however, go to that extreme.

Few of us could be comfortable with such extremely individualistic "measurements." Even as individuals we live, after all, in societies (or collections of individuals), and societies bring their own standards to life, standards just as necessary to civilization as self-discovery and personal satisfaction.

Bottom/up teaching, by contrast, is likely to stress extrinsic motivation and values, skills, and texts that are likely to be external to the learner in their orientation and nature. Bottom/up teachers are a bit more willing to delay a learner's

personal gratification in the lessons and materials at hand. They do so in the belief that mastering the structures and processes of reading in general will bring long-term benefits by equipping you to develop as a reader on your own later in life.

The same *basal readers* as texts for an entire class, similar worksheets on separate skills or rules or characteristics of language or of learning to read, classroom drills and exercises are likely to dominate when materials are selected from which reading is to be taught. Supplementary texts, storytelling, original writing by students may be used in class, but if so, mostly to motivate learners or to extend the practice and understanding of basic principles of language generally and of deciphering print in particular.

Tests are far easier to devise and more objective in bottom/up approaches to reading instruction. Discrete skills, specific abilities, the relatively steady and precise rules of language can be tested across groups of learners rather than within individuals—individuals, after all, who can differ even within themselves in ability, comprehension, and motivation from moment to moment.

Whatever the basic orientation to the techniques for teaching others to read, many, many educators in the field agree that context is preferable to isolation; that structure is usually preferable to fragmentation; and that variety is preferable to uniformity.

That is, learning to read is probably aided if your experience as an individual is tapped within the context of how language works, and if the specific abilities and general principles required in reading are approached within what you as learner can bring to the printed page from your own life.

Learning to read is probably aided by a planned, systematic program of instruction, one with goals and techniques that are consistent with each other and that follow logically from each other in keeping with a well-stated theory or set of beliefs. Even Thoreau's individualist, after all, marches to the beat of a different drummer, not to the random patter of happenstance.

The reading process is terribly complex. There is an incredible multiplicity in what there is to be read and in the purposes for reading any or all of it. As individuals, we exhibit an infinite variety and number of differences among us. Thus, teaching to read requires programs, plans, techniques that are flexible, adaptable, and varied—at the least.

Even with those, not everyone will be guaranteed to learn to read.

But reasons for that unfortunate fact lie in the plethora of factors involved in the reading process, factors we have so far only touched upon at best, factors that are partially listed in detail in the next section of this book.

# Glitches, ghosts, and remedies

There was a time when if you were basically unable to read by the end of first grade or the beginning of second, you were sent to an eye doctor. If your eyes checked out okay, you were assumed to be somewhat less than intelligent enough to learn to read well.

Even though the attitudes that led to that two-step procedure were widely recognized as archaic and unfounded by mid-twentieth century, there are still those who look just that simplistically on the ability to read and to learn to read.

There is no question that visual acuity plays its role in the reading process. Largely because of the contributions of psychology and linguistics, however, it is now just as commonly recognized by those who specialize in the teaching of reading that visual acuity and general intelligence are but two of many, many factors that can lead to problems for a person learning to read—even to disability.

Furthermore, it is unfortunately true that few major problems that arise in an individual's learning to read are singular in nature or simple in scope and definition. It is almost always true that a number of factors figure into the problems that afflict and frustrate the person who has trouble reading or learning to read, most of them beyond that person's control.

Many of the causes behind those deficiencies have been at work within or outside the individual for long periods of time before they are recognized in the individual's particular "reading problem." One cause has often led to another, compounding the overall difficulty the learner needs to overcome. Those causes are also hard, sometimes impossible, to isolate and identify. If and when identified, they are usually difficult and time-consuming to correct.

What do specialists in reading instruction know that the average citizen does not know? How have their investigations of reading *dis*ability influenced programs that produce *able* readers? Why does so much of their jargon, their professional

conversation, sound like something out of a clinic or a doctor's office? Why do so many educators talk about reading instruction as *diagnostic teaching*?

## Twentieth century studies of reading

Psychologists and linguists have always referred to their special fields of study as sciences. Even though both fields are usually considered to be social sciences or "soft" sciences, they have borrowed techniques of observation, experiment, and reporting from such physical or "hard" sciences as chemistry, physics, and biology. Psychologists especially have leaned heavily on areas so common to medicine as physiology and neurology. That includes psychologists who have specialized in studying and describing the process of reading.

Thus, it is not uncommon at a university level to find departments of research in reading located in schools of psychology, rather than in schools of education or in departments of English or any of the liberal arts popularly identified with literature and other common uses for print.

If you look to medicine as a model, as much psychology of reading has, especially in its early development as a science, it is not at all surprising that you will borrow points of view, ways of looking at problems and explaining them, even terminology, from the sciences that surround the practice of medicine.

It is completely understandable, then, that much of the contemporary practice of teaching people to read has developed indirectly from a medical model. Much of the scientific study that now informs the teaching of reading has been developed along the medical model from which psychologists have borrowed quite heavily. Just as medicine tends to concentrate on what goes wrong with the human body, psychologists who specialize in understanding how the process of reading works often look closely at what goes wrong in the process for some individuals.

By so doing, both medical and psychological researchers also learn conversely how things work when they are working well. That knowledge, in turn, leads to beliefs and practices that everyone hopes will prevent disease and disability, beliefs and practices that in the case of reading instruction influence development of teaching techniques and materials.

Linguists, of course, have not been so nearly allied with

medicine as a scientific model, if at all. Yet, their detailed scientific analyses and explanations of how language works dovetail very neatly into the work of educational psychologists, especially through the hybrid specialty glimpsed in the CONCEPTS section of this book: psycholinguistics.

Putting the two thrusts together, we can describe some of the factors involved in *readability*: what it is that makes printed language work and, thus, what it is within the text that can cause problems for a reader. We can also describe some of the factors involved in *ability to read*: what it is that makes it possible for an individual to decipher and understand print, and, thus, what can go wrong within that personal process.

## The text: readability

In trying to determine how difficult a passage is to read, several factors are easily measured. How long or short are the sentences in the passage? Are the sentences simple and straightforward in their grammar or syntax or structure, or are they complicated? Are most of the words one-syllable, or are there lots of two-, three-, and four-syllable words?

Based primarily on such easy-to-calculate clues, *readability formulae* are usually figured in terms of grade levels. Materials said to be written on a third grade level are materials you could expect an average third grader to be able to read and understand comfortably—that is, at an independent level.

In other attempts to determine the readability of text to be used in primary reading instruction, observers record the conversations of youngsters to determine which words those youngsters use commonly at various age levels. Text can then be compared—or written— with those words that most first or third or fifth graders, for instance, are likely already to have in their spoken vocabularies. Such a procedure of determining readability of text is very much in keeping with the theory of the sequence of language development, for it assumes that those words a person has mastered in the spoken language will be relatively easy for the same person to recognize in print.

Others list the words that appear most commonly in materials written for readers at various age levels, and use those as rough indications of readability. Words that show up most often in second grade reading texts, the logic goes, give some indication, at least, of what those specialists who wrote the texts apparently have discovered or believe to be within the

capabilities of the average second grader's ability to read.

Another factor that can contribute to the ease or difficulty of a given text is the number of concrete words and concepts it presents in relation to the number of abstract words and concepts. *Mother* is a concrete word so long as it refers to a particular person—for most, to the actual mother of the learner who meets the word in print. *Motherhood*, just as obviously, moves the concept of *mother* beyond specific, concrete one-to-one relationship between word and physical reality to what we might call *conceptual reality*, or *general notion*, or *idea*—an *abstraction*.

Generally, concrete words are understood on a simpler level and at an earlier age than are abstractions or generalizations. Concrete words are most appropriate to literal levels of comprehension. Abstractions—*freedom, liberty, hatred, worry*—usually demand interpretation even as they are being literally comprehended.

Passages heavy in abstract words cry out for critical reading, an ability which develops as you increase the range and number of your experiences with life and meet and accept opportunities to exercise judgment based on literal comparison and contrast of specific events and beliefs and actions and facts—to make decisions in life.

In some ways, the differences between concrete and abstract words resemble the differences between what some semanticists call *operational* and *nonoperational* language. An operational statement is one that almost anyone anywhere can check for truth against reality at almost anytime: "That person is at least six feet tall." We need only agree on the accuracy of the tape measure, lay it against "that person," and observe the measurement to determine the accuracy of the language in the statement.

By contrast, the statement "Height is a real advantage in life" is nonoperational. Value judgments, opinions, varying definitions must be brought into play if you are to interpret and respond critically to the statement. How much height—in inches? What kinds of advantage? How? Why? Under all circumstances? If not, under what circumstances? For all people? And so on and on, almost to infinity.

Such characteristics of language—it enables us to lie and mislead as well as to communicate momentary facts and eternal truths—make it necessary for us to distinguish between fact and opinion, opinion and truth in what we read. If we are to

read well, it requires us to distinguish between statements that generate heat—emotional reaction and endless bickering, and light—a new level of understanding and perhaps a temporary end to argument and controversy.

Figures of speech—saying one thing in terms of another—are additional means by which language can move away from simple one-to-one correspondence between concrete reality and literal meaning and thus demand higher levels of skill from the reader. "The golden haze of college days is 'round about us yet" has almost no concrete, operational, literal definition. Yet, even those who have not gone to college can recognize that it probably refers to nostalgia for the fuzziness, the mystery, the adventure, the joy of youth in its first feelings of independence and growth outside the conventional surroundings of childhood.

How concentrated is a given passage in its intellectual content, no matter how simple its words seem to be? "To be, or not to be, that is the question." Only one word more than four letters long, and not one word in the bunch that a first grader has not used in everyday conversation. Yet, not a first grader in the world could make much sense of Hamlet's utterance from the Shakespearean tragedy, mainly because of the concentration of its intellectual content, the wide and deep experiences with life and thought that are required to make any sense of it at all.

Problems in logic and mathematics, the language of poetry abound in intellectual or emotional concentration, overall.

How many graphic illustrations, photographs, drawings, charts break up the greyness of print on the page? Are they attractive? Do they themselves make much sense? Are they closely connected to the verbal text? Do they help the reader understand the content?

How attractive is the typography—the size and shape of the print itself? Is it large enough to be read comfortably? Are large blocks of print broken up by headings, subheadings, boldface ("extra dark") type?

Does the language in the text include dialect or specialized vocabulary or foreign phrases that might be unfamiliar to the reader? Is it an attempt to capture or recall spoken English or written English (since everyone of us carries at least two languages within us—spoken and written, languages which differ drastically from each other in grammar and vocabulary)?

Does it include archaic language—words no longer in use or words still in use but with meanings different from the originals? Shakespeare's plays, written from 1592 to 1612, or so,

seem so difficult to read for many of us in the late twentieth century because they carry a combination of such factors: figurative language, archaic vocabulary, words whose meanings have changed, complex structures, the concentration of verse form as well as of content.

The inconsistency of spelling patterns in English is still another factor in the readability of English text. Primarily because it has borrowed its vocabulary heavily from many other languages, some of its most common words seem to be spelled irregularly.

Probably the example most often quoted to illustrate the point is one that George Bernard Shaw once cited. What does *ghoti* spell in English? The answer—*fish: gh* as in *cough, o* as in *women,* and *ti* as in *nation.* Thus, the logic goes, because of inconsistency between the sounds of English and the letter combinations that represent those sounds, the problems of phonic analysis are made all the more complex for the learner.

There is no question that text—whatever can be read—varies widely in its readability. There is no doubt that the factors that determine or influence that readability are many and complex.

Yet, levels of readability can be questioned on several grounds, especially when one resorts only to a single measurement. If you depend solely on the ratio of one-syllable to polysyllabic words in a passage to determine its readability, you are asking for argument—and defeat. Anyone who studies language knows that length and complexity of words and sentences by themselves do not automatically make something easy to read or hard to read. Neither does content density nor spelling regularity nor any other single factor.

But, these and other factors in readability of text affect the success of readers quite profoundly, especially given the many, many factors in ability to read that every individual brings in varying degree and nature to the task of reading. Taken together and evaluated by common sense, they help us look somewhat objectively at factors of potential difficulty—call them challenges and measurements of enrichment, if you will—in whatever there is to be read.

## Personal factors: ability to read

Recall for a moment the elements of language development: experience, listening, speaking, reading, writing. What factors are involved in a person's ability to listen well? Acuity, distance,

volume, patterns of sound, differences in dialect? All of these and more.

Speaking? Flexibility and positions of tongue and palate and lips, ability to imitate as closely as possible the sounds you hear from those around you, assuming those sounds are most appropriate and similar to sounds expected of you when you first begin to read the printed page for whichever instructor.

Reading? Your visual acuity and discrimination—that is, how clearly can you see and with what subtleties of distinction between ascenders and descenders—the upward stroke of the letter *b* as contrasted with the downward stroke of the letter *p*, for instance? Your ability to take in more than a character or even a word at one fixation of your eyes. The coordination between your eyes, and between the sound and meaning and sight signals that must take place in your mind before they come together in the act of reading. Your ability to move eyes systematically from left to right and top to bottom within the margins of the printed page.

Your backgrounds of experience, not only in the content or activity of your life to date, but in your exposure to patterns of sound and meaning that elaborate—or deprive—the language to which you have been exposed. Your ability to understand sequence.

Your attitudes and motivation, the question of whether or not you value ability to read as those around you have valued it or not, depending on the examples they have set for you. The opportunities you have had to try out words on your own, to talk and be heard, to listen and respond, to look for clues and answers and messages in a page of print or in pictures in a book.

Your intellectual ability to use all such factors to their fullest potential in bringing meaning to the page and taking meaning from it, your emotional acceptance of the process and the goal, the social context in which the process is valued or not, the pleasures or pains of your involvement in language to date.

Your neurological ability to process the sounds, the sights, the thoughts, the feelings entirely necessary to reading anything at all. Your sensitivity to the differences between spoken and written language, between the spoken language of one person or one group and another, similar differences in written language, as well as in intent, purpose, audience.

That reading is a tremendously complicated process has been commonly recognized by those who have studied the

process in the twentieth century. The factors involved in your ability to read with ease are many: neurological, perceptual, socioeconomic, cultural, dialectal, motivational, educational. There are, therefore, all but infinite possibilities for things to go wrong in any combination anywhere along the way.

Almost anyone who specializes in the problems that can develop among those learning to read knows that there can hardly be any one cause for whatever problem in whichever person. Such specialists speak not of single *cause*, but of *etiology*—connoting a cluster, an array, a potential multiplicity of factors involved in the problems with reading that can be faced by a specific reader.

Thus, the title of this section of the book, **Glitches, ghosts, and remedies.** Things can go wrong—glitches; things beyond control of the potential reader—ghosts; and, when things go wrong, with or without absolute accuracy and confidence in diagnosis—remedy! Making things right!

Like readability of text, the individual's ability to read is typically described by grade level, although it is defined by interests, backgrounds, attitudes, abilities. It is assumed to be a measure of the ability of the reader, not a measure of the readability of the language at hand in whatever page of print.

## Determining individual ability

As you might expect, however, having read this book thus far, measuring and testing ability to read and accomplishment in learning to read are very complex matters. One of the best, though most time-consuming methods, is a device or technique known as an informal reading inventory (IRI). In some remedial programs, an IRI is mandated before an instructional program is planned for a particular student, though an IRI can be helpful in planning any individual's instructional program.

Briefly, an IRI indicates *within an individual student* those factors and basic skills of reading that we have already touched in this book: word attack, sight vocabulary, phonic analysis ability, comprehension. It estimates a person's independent, instructional, frustration, and capacity levels of reading ability at the moment the IRI is being administered.

Standardized tests, by contrast, can be given to all the students in an entire grade within a school district within an hour or two. Unfortunately, they tend to yield relatively little information about individuals who took the test other than their

general standing in relation to others who have taken the test. Such tests are adequate for assessing general achievements by huge groups or clusters of learners, but they are notoriously poor at defining specific problems faced by individuals.

In fact, some studies indicate that standardized tests tend to measure students at their frustration levels rather than their independent or instructional levels—a poor indication of what can be done to help those students as individuals to improve their respective abilities to read.

It is relatively easy, too, to compute reading rate—that is, the speed at which an individual is able to process materials being read. Much has been made of "speed reading," probably with more claims for importance and success than are warranted. Undoubtedly, the faster you can process print *with no loss of comprehension*, the more efficient you become as a reader.

However, what is speed worth when one is savoring a poem by Robert Frost, or the first page of *Moby Dick*, or a favorite adage; or trying to fathom a statement of intensely philosophical position or logic, or of mathematical possibility, or of imponderable political choice?

Reading rate is certainly important for a teacher to compute in giving reading assignments, for instance, or for a parent or other responsible adult to understand when a student has been given a reading assignment. Knowing that a rate of 400 words per minute at independent level is not all that bad, even for many adults, gives perspective to the assignment of one overnight reading of two chapters of science text (perhaps 5,000 words, many of them specialized, all of them probably heavy in intellectual content) when the student has also been given assignments in four or five other major subjects.

Reading flexibility is probably far more useful to the individual reader than sheer speed. Speed of reading is not nearly so desirable as flexibility. Knowing when to skim, when to delve, when to leap, when to dig—those are skills far more important for the maturing reader than plain and simple increases in reading speed.

Of course, an individual's reading levels and speed can vary, depending on mood, motivation, and what is being read. If you are turned on by science, but off by literature, it is obvious that you will very likely read scientific material at a higher level than you will a series of sonnets.

No one has a single level of reading ability. You can expect a person's reading level to vary from test to test, time to time,

topic to topic, mood to mood. We need to know more about each person as a reader. How was the reading level computed? What materials were used in testing? How often was the person tested? Were all the tests given on the same day? Or, were they spread over several weeks to allow for changes in mood and attitude?

Techniques have been developed that allow teachers to gather relatively fast, if sometimes suspect, indications of how well reading materials match the reading abilities of a given group of students. Several standard readability formulae have been devised and are readily available in many advanced textbooks on reading. Their indications of readability can be compared with average abilities to read as calculated through standardized exams for specific groups of students.

A simple technique known as cloze procedure is in rather growing use, especially by teachers in the middle and upper grades. Essentially, every fifth word is deleted from a passage. Students are then asked to fill in the blanks. A success rate of less than 40% in the task indicates that the passage is probably on a student's frustration level, of 40-60% on instructional level, of better than 60% on an independent level.

Some teachers and school districts have also devised projects in rewriting and in tutoring. Older students who have themselves faced problems with reading have written materials for younger students to read, thus aiding their own understanding of how language works at the same time they hope to help the younger students.

Students are sometimes asked to rewrite materials from their own textbooks, again a technique that requires close attention to text, but with a personalized touch. Or, teachers themselves rewrite materials to the reading levels of their students.

*Peer tutoring* has classmates helping classmates; *cross-age tutoring* has older students helping younger; and many senior citizens have been happily recruited to tutor young readers in classrooms across the land.

## Kinds of instruction

Reading levels are not nearly so accurate and well-defined as some educators and publishers would have us believe. At the same time, if measured competently, they are better than a personal guess or random opinion in matching a student with the right book or article to make reading as pleasant, as com-

fortable, as rewarding, and as informative as possible.

Ideally, of course, teachers of reading have at hand all the resources—professional skill and training, materials, support personnel—to apply all that can be learned about any individual who is learning to read.

But, being completely realistic, let it be said that few command such resources. Matching a specific student with a specific page of print at exactly the most appropriate time according to the characteristics of the page and the abilities of the student at that moment is all but a dream. A more pragmatic goal, given limited time, limited professional background, and limited resources, is to come as close as possible to meeting the ideal.

Diagnosis is possible for almost every person who has special troubles learning to read. It is also time-consuming, costly, and not guaranteed to result in absolute satisfaction for all concerned. Thorough diagnosis can take days and a whole battery of tests, as well as interviews, psychological profiles, surveys of home and school environments, attitudes. Such extensive diagnosis is usually reserved for those who seem to have quite obvious and serious problems in reading.

Even so-called diagnostic teaching—that is, figuring out the specific steps through which a given student should next be led in learning to read—is an ideal to be admired more than it is a day-to-day reality in the typical classroom.

What to do once problems have been diagnosed or defined brings its own challenges. How much material is available from which to choose? How much time is available for personal coaching, tutoring, teaching for the student, if individual attention is required in the specific "treatment?" When will further "diagnosis" be available to that student? By what means?

Problems with reading are particularly complex and generalized by the time a student reaches high school or college. Unfortunately, they have also usually been compounded by years of frustration along the student's school path.

Luckily, most students learn to read at least adequately, and many extremely well, in spite of the complexity of the process and the limitations imposed on teaching to read. Most do not become "problem readers."

However, those who specialize in reading instruction normally identify three different kinds of reading instruction or "treatment," each depending on the particular needs of the

reader as indicated through testing and diagnosis.

*Remedial reading* instruction is generally applied to those learners who probably cannot profit from regular classroom instruction. Their specific needs are greater than the teacher in a regular classroom will be able to accommodate, given normal training, limited resources, and broad demands in numbers of students and range of subjects to be taught.

*Corrective reading* also requires special attention from an instructor, but the problems faced by the specific "corrective reader" probably can be addressed within a normal classroom.

*Developmental reading* is what we should expect of the person learning to read with few or no problems at an instructional level within regular classroom instruction.

## Is the model changing?

Such terms and definitions and concepts as we have touched on as FACTORS in this section of the book have become relatively common within the specialized field of reading instruction only within the past three or four decades. And, like most other innovations in American education, some are already falling into less frequent use in recent years.

Perhaps the medical model behind them is fading or broadening or otherwise changing as a model. Perhaps reading research is simply looking to other models in greater proportion than it did forty or fifty years ago when psychology yielded such impact. Perhaps the social consciousness and political sensitivity felt in so much American life during the past twenty years is now influencing American reading instruction. Perhaps its leading scholars and practitioners are simply improving on the work of preceding generations.

Whatever the reasons, such concepts as remedial reading linger heavily within the field, but fewer and fewer programs, fewer and fewer professionals labor under the term *remedial.* Laws have been passed to discourage anyone's displacement or removal from regular classrooms and "treatment." Expansion of the term *handicapped* and broader understandings of the many, many factors that can handicap individuals in their pursuit of living life to the fullest have brought redefinitions in teaching to read, as in so many other areas of American life.

Those who specialize in the teaching of reading today are just as likely to recognize and pursue the need for teaching high schoolers and adults how to read the specialized texts of the so-

called *content areas*—how reading a driver's manual differs from reading a review of art and architecture, for instance. They are as equally interested in general literacy and readership as in the quasi-medical factors involved in learning to read.

They speak of *schemata*, the general concepts and experiences that readers bring to pages of print, and of *discourse analysis*, which looks beyond how letters turn into words and words into sentences toward how passages turn into arguments and thoughts. They develop strategies that will bring every teacher, every adult leader into the act of teaching others to read the corpus of print that burgeons grander, more critical, more enticing with each year.

Reading clinics and skill centers remain. As a matter of fact, many within the specialty of reading instruction criticize their own as dwelling much too persistently in a professional world of skill-drill-teach-and-test.

But, observations of subtle changes in the field, and criticisms about the basic roles and practices expected of reading return us to the need for historical perspective. Just as the process of reading does not begin solely with a page of print, teaching and learning to read did not begin with the contemporary medical model and the influence of psycholinguistics, nor has it ended there.

It began at least in the mountains and the stars.

And that is the story of **Language, letters, and scenes.**

# Language, letters, and scenes

Only in the last two or three centuries have we expected everybody to learn to read. Only in the five hundred years since Gutenberg has universal literacy been economically practicable. In the long sweep of human history, two or three hundred years—five hundred years—is nothing.

Furthermore, we live today in an age of throwaway print—literally. Walk the streets of any major city in the United States, pass the entrance to any shopping mall, and be waylaid by one huckster or another shoving a leaflet or flyer into your hand, a piece of print pushing this cause or need, that product or service.

Most of us glance quickly at that miracle now rendered commonplace—a printed message—then drop it in the nearest trash can, or, worse yet, toss it wrinkled to the ground.

The American Book Awards have been in trouble as a program in recent years, some publishers tell us, because too many award-winning books have been declared out-of-print before the annual awards ceremony can be held.

Some ten years ago, I read that every Sunday edition of *The New York Times* consumes forty acres of pulpwood—trees converted into print, much of which is outdated before Monday morning rolls around.

Books abound, files bulge, journals proliferate, print balloons to the point that I sometimes wonder facetiously if anybody is reading anything at all or, rather, if we are all of us so busy writing that none of us is able to find time to read.

As one with special interest in reading, you are caught up in this frenetic, commonplace phenomenon, both as you perpetuate the process of reading and as you set standards and define purposes for it, or hope that others are doing so.

Historically, of course, there had to be a Gutenberg to set in motion the revolutionary technology that has resulted in today's deluge of print. The introduction into Europe of moveable type, a development which Gutenberg represents, is a milestone in civilization. Mass production of the printed

page made universal literacy economically attractive.

And, if Gutenberg and Caxton and others had not introduced the technology of mass print into the spiritual and intellectual ferment of 15th century Europe, it is doubtful when, if ever, the mystery of the open page would have become so accessible to all, so inexpensive to produce, so taken for granted as it is today.

We might never have developed as a society of readers beyond that stage at which single copies of a few treasured titles were chained to pulpits. We probably never would have grown to the point where masterpieces sit next to TV guides, circulars, supermarket flyers—all of them issuing at one and the same time from one and the same basic technology.

The copiers that now chew up reams of paper in every office and school in the land have only made each of us a potential Gutenberg in our capacity to reproduce print, with or without dedication to scholarship and faith. We have only to type the master copy and push the button.

The English colonists at Massachusetts Bay and in Virginia extended into their lives many of the notions and ideals that evolved during what we now call the European Renaissance and its strong religious components from the late 15th through early 17th centuries. It is hardly surprising that in Massachusetts, at least, they established common schools within their first quarter-century in the New World, and that the primary purpose of those schools was promotion of universal literacy as a foundation for moral stature and godly living.

Especially among the landed gentry of the Virginia plantations, instruction in classical models further informed the blossoming popularization of religious and political inquiry.

With the War for Independence, common literacy emerged as necessary to good citizenship in a developing land. The agrarian America of 1800 to 1875 brought a catch phrase that still dominates our educational system—the three Rs of Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic. Literacy helped cultivate the fields, and later fuel the factories as the United States industrialized.

As one with special interest in reading, you have inherited the belief that reading holds such revolutionary power and promise.

## Pre-Gutenberg: myth, mystery, magic

Literacy and literature did not begin with Gutenberg, however. Before the printing press there were books, and they were treasured, copied by hand, as we all know, recopied, illuminated, guarded, revered. There was no throwaway print before the age of moveable type. Rather, there were words recorded in bronze and stone, written on scrolls by specially honored and trained scribes, words entrusted to the few who could carve them in wood or bake them in clay or scratch them laboriously on papyrus, then read them back to the rest of us.

Their works were secreted in caves and libraries and fortresses and guarded and treasured as only something sacred can be. Elitism, rigorous training, holy trust and sacred vocation—those were characteristics of the literate before ability to read was democratized through the printing press.

Special privilege of the priests, the oracles, the scribes, mastering the visible word was to put oneself close to the gods, occasionally even in communication with the gods, solving the riddles of the Sphinx. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is significant that Moses climbed the mountain, spoke with God, then recorded the sacred words on tablets of stone which he in turn read to the people, interpreting what became their foundation of life, of ethics, of morality.

In Greek tradition, there were the oracles, spoken to and heard from only by the most worthy of citizens at Delphi and elsewhere, passing along secrets by which people might live better lives and society might develop a greater sense of order and purpose. In the Celtic tradition, Druids chanted eternal truth throughout the tribal woodlands and meadows, reserving unto themselves the literacy that was at once the source and vehicle of that truth.

Even before the literate elite, there were the shamans, the storytellers, the oral historians. Some still practice their ancient roles in Africa and Asia and among American Indians and the mountain folk. They chant the tribal histories, the family tales, reading the patterns of life in the people around them, and developing the rhythms that come down to us in poetry and song.

Contemporary reading echoes those traditions, also—the oral history, the storytelling, the music and the poetry, the magic of incantation, the epics of Odysseus and Beowulf and Sinbad.

Also long, long centuries before the introduction of printing, humanity read the streams, the trees, the stones, the stars, and put them into words. Our forebears read the heavens, projecting themselves into the natural universe even as they assumed that they themselves reflected what they saw there.

They named the rivers, the mountains, the constellations, seeing the Great Bear, the Little Bear, the Archer, bringing themselves to the page of nature and bringing from that page meanings they read into their own lives. There is no purer example of the process in reading of bringing meaning to and taking meaning from the page.

It might be that reading the moving, four-color figures on a video display terminal will eventually become far more challenging and enlightening than the unyielding squiggles of print on a page ever made possible.

It might be that reading further reaches of the natural universe will yield belief and fascination and awe to an intensity that Orion was never able to generate within the thoughtful shepherds on the ancient hillsides.

The origins and ultimate uses of reading are lost in mystery and found in mystery. As a reader, that fact is your legacy as well as your invaluable contribution to humanity.

## Why historical perspective?

Preprint, print, supralinguistic—why place learning to read, teaching to read in such a broad perspective?

Primarily because we seem so often to look upon means of communication solely as progressive development, each new medium potentially replacing that which has preceded. The technologies of the past 100 years, dramatic in their impact, startling in the rush by which they have been introduced, lead some to predict the death of reading, the obsolescence of print.

Yet reading is nothing new, and neither are nonprint modes of communication. They are as ancient as the earliest recollection of human existence. Reading is no more in conflict and competition with "nonprint" methods of communication in the twentieth century than it was in the first dawn of emerging humanity. Rather, the relationships among the various means, the various techniques of communication, have always been complementary, not adversarial.

Oh, certainly, in the shortsighted economic sense of immediate profit and loss, certain pages of print lose out to

television, or movies, or recordings, or so it seems at least for the moment. But, so do individuals here and there, now and then, more often rather than never at all, in moments hidden from the ledgers of cost accounting—so do individuals choose pages of print to other communication.

How can we fear losing the benefits of literacy when an earlier oral/aural age produced Shakespearean plays, the poetry of Marlowe and Donne, the intricate, delicate lyrics of madrigal and sonnet, as well as the King James *Bible*, and political statements and philosophical tracts that continue to illuminate our lives some four centuries later?

Historical differences among the basic techniques of communication are differences of degree, of complexity, of relative proliferation and use at any one moment of human development. The essential qualities of reading remain, just as do the distinctive characteristics and benefits of other means of communication. All are extremely operational in modern civilization. Even as ability to read depends heavily on ability to listen and speak and see, so do so-called "nonliterate" societies depend on trail markers, visual symbols, the reading of natural phenomena.

With the swing of the last half-century toward scientific analysis in the teaching of reading, primarily through psychology and linguistics, it is important to remind ourselves of the larger historical context and meaning and human impact of what it is *to read*.

So, too, can we accept other technologies, other processes of communication where they open new pages to us and to those around us. Historical context helps us to recognize the changing shape of literacy, to investigate the new mysteries waiting to be explored through reading and learning to read as well as through other means of communication.

Where do we go from here, having been reminded of the larger history of reading—which is one and the same with the history of humanity, of learning to read, whether by print or by simple, natural vision?

Knowing its history, I myself have no fear for the future of literacy. Recent technology is only shaking out those things that will more appropriately be rendered in nonprint media at any rate. Consign them to video screens and computerized voice.

Just as any human being who can be replaced by a machine should be, so should any page of print that can be replaced by

another medium be so replaced. As readers, let us cherish those messages, those processes, those uses of literacy that are characteristic of its best history, its best traditions, that are uniquely appropriate to the tradition of print literacy. Let us use reading where it is most economical to do so, given its unique characteristics. Let us see it in the history of civilization as rigorously as we view it in the economics of the day.

## A lesson in definitions

If I would have us do nothing else, I would have us listen to language all the way back (a phrase I first met in comments by John Ciardi). Especially should we reflect on the jargon so glibly used in contemporary discussions of teaching to read, learning to read.

Knowing the ancient history of reading, the term *back to basics* takes me to the mountaintop with Moses. I need to look at the sky with the Greek and Near Eastern astronomers, naming the constellations. I need to kneel at Delphi, to share the craftsmanship and dedication of Gutenberg, the turmoil of Renaissance Europe, the devotion of anonymous scribes passing their laborious vocation one to another through countless centuries.

*Word recognition* brings to my mind those early experiences when I first recognized that I could not reach the ends of meaning behind certain words like *forevermore*, *universe*, *infinity*, even *self*, when I learned to recognize in certain words meaning beyond mystery beyond meaning beyond mystery, reaching for layers of consciousness and imagination—trying to recognize a word in all its fullness and mystery.

*Context* leads me to that favorite answer of mine when people ask me to name the three most important books in my life. I always respond, *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod*, *The Little Red Hen*, and *Chicken Little*, for I first heard those three stories in the context of my mother's or grandmother's lap, in the context of the late 1930s, a context which included bombs falling on Shanghai, tanks rumbling in Europe, and a shy, fearful, hopeful little boy listening to words with more meaning in them for me than mother or grandmother could ever have believed.

Why pay attention to the history of reading? If for nc other reason, to give us a sense of perspective unavailable by any other means. It helps us to understand what we are up to in our own reading, and what we are up to in hoping others will learn to read—and why.

# Where am I? Where are you? Where are they?

"What are you doing?"

"Oh, nothing—just reading."

Few other specialties raise such stereotypical responses as the subjects of learning and teaching to read, or simply of reading. Tell people that you work for an association of reading instructors and four out of five will say, "Oh, you mean speed reading, and all that?"

Nothing is so basic in "getting back to the basics," many people feel, as "good reading instruction"—which usually translates as "the way I was taught to read," even though few can recall exactly how that happened.

Educators themselves—those who specialize in the teaching of reading, at any rate—lapse into a torrent of standard jargon, heavy in acronyms, when the teaching of reading enters the conversation: i/t/a, SSR, DRA, IRI, SQ3R, CAI, behavior modification, dyslexia, subvocalization.

About few other topics could most people so truthfully say, "My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with the facts." That is, if we could bring them to see in all honesty their own attitudes toward and beliefs about teaching and learning to read.

Even those of us who specialize in the study of reading or simply hold literacy near and dear as a lifelong activity are so caught up in what reading is and does that we forget what it is not and what it cannot do.

How often have you heard a response like the one which opens this section? "Oh, nothing—just reading." What does it mean? Are we really telling others that reading has no value in our lives, that it simply helps us fill time? Or, does the response reflect our appreciation of the easy accessibility and personalized use of reading as a valued activity—the fact that we can pick it up at any time, and that thus it is, in a sense, "nothing" for the moment, but *only for the moment.*

What do you bring to the statement, what do you take from it, either as questioner or respondent? Is the glass half empty, or half full?

Your attitudes are showing if you have ever responded, "Oh, nothing—just reading." They are showing loudly, if not too clearly.

## Seeking positions—your own and others'

Approached as they have been in this book, the subjects of language and reading take us very quickly into approximations rather than exactitude.

That inevitability was brought home to me quite vividly the first time I compared translations of the Lord's Prayer in, respectively, Old English, Middle English, Elizabethan English, and 20th Century American. *Forgive us our guilt* turned into *trespass*, then into *debt*, and finally into the ultimate concept of today's credit card society, *Forgive us what we owe you.* The tangible *loaf* generalized into *daily bread*, then abstracted into *our daily needs.*

Where is eternal, absolute truth in such transition of word and concept from translation to translation, place to place, century to century within little more than a thousand years—all within the same basic language?

To whom are you talking about the subject of reading? What does that person know? From what experience? With what attitudes? What authority? What basic knowledge? What persuasion or slant? For what purposes?

Deciding whether we are good or bad readers, individually or as a nation, depends on who quotes what figures to prove which point—and why.

Who, if anyone, knows what reading is all about, and who knows little or nothing? How can you tell the difference? How can we move conversation from sterile diatribe to creative dialogue?

How can you determine where you are on particular issues and beliefs? And, where are those with whom or about whom you would discuss and question and dialogue? How can we distinguish trends and traditional from fad and ephemeral?

Keeping always in mind the need to interpret responses fully, if not read them critically, there are many questions, survey statements, and habits which reveal our attitudes toward reading. Some follow. There are no right or wrong answers.

There are only responses which, thoughtfully considered, reveal where you and others are.

## Your personal habits as a reader

In the past twelve months, how many books have you read? Magazines? Newspapers? Which other materials? Completely or in part? Which parts? For what purposes? In front of other people or not? With or without satisfaction and fulfillment?

Was the reading required on the job or in school? How much of it voluntary? For entertainment or information? At someone else's suggestion or entirely on your own?

How many different magazines do you read regularly? Are you a subscriber, borrower, or buyer of single copies? Why do you choose those you read?

Are you a browser or a digger? Wide or narrow in your interests in reading?

Does your own home indicate that we are a nation of readers? Do you keep up-to-date with newspapers and magazines, or do you depend mostly on television and radio for your news? Do you read to those around you, children or adults? Do you discuss things you have read with those around you?

Are you aware of how much you do or do not use reading in your daily life? How many minutes per hour, hours per day, do you spend reading? Do you refer to cookbooks, repair manuals, road maps, tour guides, financial records, legal documents?

In buying or making gifts and furniture, do you include what might be called reading accessories—bookshelves, bookmarks, dust jackets, reading lamps, magazine racks? Have you exchanged books or magazine subscriptions as gifts?

Do you and those around you hold and use library cards? Have you volunteered to help at your local school or community library? Have you encouraged those around you, especially the young, to subscribe to magazines or book clubs?

Do you communicate with others, especially the very young, in reasonably complete sentences? Do you include in your normal conversation with others not only relatively standard grammatical structures, but also verbal explanations of your decisions or directions? Do you try to match the style of your conversation—the words you use, the way you use them—with the backgrounds of those to whom you are talking? Do you vary that style to make it appropriate to specific situations as well as to your purposes and immediate audience?

When you meet a new or unfamiliar word in reading, do you usually stop reading and look it up in a dictionary? Do you guess at its meaning and continue reading? Do you ignore it and continue reading? Do you stop reading or turn to another article or story? Do you ask someone nearby what it means? What would you expect of someone just learning to read? Does that expectation differ from your own habits? How? Why?

If you are an adult responsible for a younger person still in school, do you ask where you and that younger person fit into whatever statistics are cited in headlines about "national reading problems"? Are the statistics appropriate to you and those around you?

## Attitudes toward language, reading, and teaching

Do you believe that language should be absolutely uniform from person to person, situation to situation, audience to audience, purpose to purpose? Or, do you believe that while language is shared by members of a particular language group, it is also subject to almost infinite variations among its users, and that such variations should be cherished?

How familiar are you with the terms and concepts in the GLOSSARY that follows, especially as they are used by those who specialize in reading as a process? Do you know what is meant by such other terms as syntax, eye span, decoding, miscue analysis, psychomotor skills, deep structure, morphology, inflected forms, minimal pairs, visual configuration, structural analysis, convergent/divergent thinking, bibliotherapy, reading profile?

How do you feel about the fact that the range of individual reading abilities in a typical group of sixth graders is normally from third to ninth grades? Or, that the average silent reading rate for a typical middle school student reading nontechnical material is likely to be 200 to 250 words per minute?

Do you know how much time is required for a particular person to do the reading required for each particular job or school assignment, day by day? Do you know that person's reading rate, level of reading ability, the readability of the assigned material?

Do you feel comfortable, insecure, unqualified, uninformed, supportive, or "all of the above" about the teaching of reading in the schools? Do you believe that parents or other adults

responsible for students should be kept altogether out of teaching youngsters to read? Or, do you believe they should be fully involved in the reading instruction, even to regular participation in curriculum planning, classroom instruction, and teacher evaluation?

Is the best classroom organization for reading instruction built around one basic set of materials through which all students are led at the same pace? Is it creatively eclectic with no regularly planned program and with students working as they please? Or, is it somewhere between these two extremes?

Do you believe that beginning reading instruction should build entirely from the phonetic and alphabetic characteristics of language? Or, should it build from experiences within the life of each individual child through personal stories told by the child and written down by an adult?

Do you believe that the same basic exercises in word recognition are necessary for all those learning to read? Or do you believe no such exercises would be needed if a teacher took full advantage of the full range of each learner's listening and speaking vocabularies?

Is verbal knowledge *about* how language works—being able to call a consonant *a consonant*, for instance—absolutely necessary in learning to read? Or, is learning to read mainly a matter of using structures of language that the learner has probably already mastered through normal use?

Does the best reading program provide for systematic presentation of the rules and structure of language? Or, should facts about language be presented informally as situations arise among learners that illustrate those rules or indicate a specific need for their presentation?

What should be done with students who have difficulty reading assigned textbooks or other materials? Should they be given supplementary or alternative materials, shifted to another program or section, held back in school, be taught by techniques or materials that do not require reading?

Who is primarily responsible for the teaching of reading: elementary teachers, reading specialists, all teachers, parents, everyone who believes that reading is valuable?

Should instructional texts or materials be chosen according to the abilities of specific learners, general interest, readability levels? By their content no matter what student abilities and readability of text may be?

Should formal instruction in reading include deferred values?

That is, can a lesson in reading, no matter how difficult or painful for the learner, be carried out successfully in the belief that it will prove useful later in the life of the learner? Or, should every lesson be designed and carried out for immediate impact on the student's life here and now?

Does an individual best develop an appreciation for reading by instruction in the formal rules of language which make reading possible, or by reading widely and sharing with others the understanding, information and enjoyment that came through that reading?

When should the process of learning to read be pretty much completed? By grade one, two, three? Four, five six? High school? College? Never?

## A final word

We are not the nation of good readers we could become. Few people deny that America has a reading problem. They simply disagree on the nature and magnitude of the problem.

While many critics point to low estimates of reading ability among individuals, others define our reading problem in altogether different terms—according to tastes and content.

No one believes that the art of teaching others to read has been perfected. We simply sometimes disagree on how best to approach perfection.

Some believe that we need carrots on sticks, or shoves from behind, or reasons from within, before we become the nation of readers we could become.

Few other factors are so important in our success or failure as readers, either individually or as a nation, as our attitudes toward reading. How it is taught, how it is learned, how it is put to use, its purposes, its effectiveness, the extent of its influence and usefulness as a mean of communication—these and more depend largely on our support, our interest, our knowledge about it. And those, in turn, are shaped primarily by our attitudes.

Controversy and disagreement may be perennial hallmarks of any dialogue about the teaching and learning of reading in our schools and the status of reading in our society. Far more damaging to the cause of good reading, if I may refer to an ancient necessity of human life as a "cause," are apathy, complacency, or lack of attention on the part of those who read, especially those who cherish reading for themselves and for others.

Whether you are primarily a reader, a teacher, or a learner, your answers to the questions that surround learning and teaching to read, like the meaning in a page of print, depend primarily on what you bring to them and take from them. So, too, is the state of reading in these United States very much yours to help define and, if you choose, to nurture.

As a reader you are already involved in that constant redefinition. Will you maintain that involvement, expand it, or withdraw? Inform yourself further, enter into dialogue with others, or seek no more?

Those choices, like the decision to turn this page or that one, are yours alone to make.

GLOSSARY

## Unlocking the jargon

There are literally thousands of terms in the technical vocabulary of those who specialize in the study and teaching of reading. Some are rather unique to the specialty. Others borrow from more common vocabulary, but are used with meanings specific to the teaching, learning, and process of reading. Many have already been introduced in this book.

The terms that follow are among those more widely known and used within the specialty. Fuller definitions and more extensive technical vocabulary can be found rather easily in textbooks in the field of reading. Probably the most comprehensive collection of terms and definitions is *A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms*, published by the International Reading Association, Post Office Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714.

The definitions that follow are purposely brief. Almost every term has in itself been the subject of numerous books and articles.

**audiolingual method** A technique of teaching someone to learn a second language. It depends heavily on introducing the new language through conversation, followed closely by exercises in simple word recognition, and eventually in full use of all four language activities—in loose sequence: listening, speaking, reading, writing.

**auditory discrimination** The ability to hear differences in sounds as they signal differences in meaning.

**basal reader** One in a series of books designed for initial instruction in reading. Basal readers are intended for use with groups of youngsters. They are designed to introduce skills step-by-step by careful control of vocabulary and increasing difficulty through the first several years of schooling.

**blend** The merging of sounds represented by two or more distinct letters. The *bl* in *blend* itself, for instance, is an example of a consonant blend.

**capacity level** The highest grade level of ability to read that can be expected of a particular person at a particular stage of development.

**comprehension** Recognition of the meanings symbolized by specific combinations of letters, words, and sentences.

**content reading** Reading that is normally carried out in school subjects other than in reading class itself. Few "content area" teachers in the United States have been trained extensively, if at all, in the process and teaching of reading.

**context** Most technically, the language that surrounds a given word or phrase and thus influences its meaning.

**corrective reading** Specialized instruction in a regular classroom for those learners who have unusual or somewhat abnormal difficulty learning to read.

**critical reading** The reader's infusion of personal standards, values, judgments, and beliefs into the process of reading, and, thus, the reader's considered reaction or response to the material at hand.

**developmental reading** Instruction in a regular classroom for those students who are learning to read at a rate and to the level expected of them, given the factors known about their ability and the readability of the material.

**diagnosis** The identification, largely through testing and analysis, of specific strengths and weaknesses in a learner's ability to read.

**dominance** The larger influence of one of the two hemispheres of the brain over the other and thus of the functions and abilities controlled by the two hemispheres respectively. While few doubt that dominance can be a factor in reading and learning to read, there has been occasional controversy, some of it heated, about the extent of its importance as a factor in most people.

**DRA, DRTA** Acronyms for *directed reading activity*, and *directed reading-thinking activity*. Both refer to rather specific steps recommended for specific reading lessons. They include preparation, initial reading, appropriate skill and vocabulary analysis and development, plus rereading and follow-up, or verification.

**dyslexia** A severe condition, variously defined, in which apparent neurological dysfunction interferes with a person's ability to recognize visual symbols of language and thus hinders that person's ability to read.

**ESL** An acronym for English as a second language, ESL refers rather broadly to instructional programs or materials for those who enter an English-speaking classroom knowing little or no English.

**frustration level** The grade level of ability at which a person is capable of recognizing no more than 90% of the words in a passage and of comprehending no more than half its content.

**functional literacy** A general term for the reading ability required to function productively in the everyday world. Definitions of functional literacy have ranged from ability to read traffic signs and bus schedules through ability to read and interpret complicated, highly technical insurance policies and financial documents.

**independent level** The grade level at which a person reads material easily, comfortably, and well, recognizing almost every word and with complete or nearly complete comprehension.

**inference** The suggested or added meaning that a reader brings to the literal definition of a word or phrase or sentence. If someone says, "I have written only one word," you would most likely infer at least that the person had been expected to write more than one word.

**informal reading inventory (IRI)** A rather formalized technique for testing and diagnosing an individual's ability to read. Specific steps to be followed and means of gathering and

interpreting results are described in most specialized textbooks in reading instruction.

**instructional level** The grade level of ability at which a learner will most benefit from regular classroom instruction in reading.

**interpretive reading** The reader's understanding of the material at hand in light of the author's purposes and intent. Interpretation goes beyond merely literal meanings and definitions of words and sentences in that it requires some measure of judgment and inference on the part of the reader.

**language arts** A rather inclusive term that connotes relatively integrated or overlapping instruction in two or more of the language activities—listening, speaking, reading, writing—as well as such subsidiary or parallel interests and activities as literature, speech, drama, and any other generalized or specialized use of language.

**language experience approach** A technique of teaching youngsters to read by drawing for materials on their individual or group experiences as well as on the language skills and vocabulary they have already mastered in their personal lives. Many of the materials are stories or reports dictated by the youngsters to teachers or other adults, who write the words on "charts" or other visual devices.

**literal interpretation** Word recognition and comprehension in relatively concrete or direct one-to-one relationship. Recognizing that the word *dog* refers to an animal most of us would call a "dog" is a clear example of literal interpretation of meaning.

**perception** The physical, neurological, and mental ability to see or hear and recognize the visual or aural symbols of language.

**phonics** As the term is most often used, a method of teaching reading that emphasizes the relationships between letters and sounds.

**primer, preprimer** Usually, the first and easiest books in a series of basal readers.

**readability** The relative ease or difficulty with which a given

passage can be read by the average reader at any particular grade level.

**readiness** The stage which prepares any reader for a reading task immediately ahead. Most often, the term refers to the skills, abilities, knowledge, and experience most needed for likely success in initial reading instruction.

**reading clinic** A specialized program or site for diagnosing, analyzing, reporting, and remediating the specific problems faced by those with a suspected or obvious difficulty in reading or in learning to read.

**reading disability** An abnormal difficulty with reading or learning to read.

**remedial reading** Specialized instruction, usually in a special setting, for those who have severe problems or extremely abnormal difficulty learning to read.

**sight vocabulary** Those words which a person can recognize and comprehend as soon as seen, with no conscious phonic or visual analysis required.

**SQ3R** An acronym for *survey-question-read-recite-review*, a strategy often recommended as a study approach to reading assignments for those who are beyond initial reading instruction.

**subvocalization** The habit of moving your lips or other organs of speech mechanism while reading silently. Generally, subvocalization is seen as a symptom that you may be having difficulty with the material you are reading at the moment.

**study skills** Those specific abilities that help a person comprehend a reading assignment—such skills as skimming, survey, paying attention to headings, interpreting graphs and other illustrations, identifying and understanding key vocabulary, and understanding an author's purpose, among others.

**visual discrimination** The ability to see differences in letters and words as they signal differences in meaning or sound.

**word recognition** Ability to identify a cluster of letters as the visual symbol for one or another meaning, referent, idea, or concept.

SOURCES

## Names and addresses

Thousands of publishers, organizations, periodicals, and programs are dedicated in great measure to literacy and its development. Even if one were to limit a list only to those which specialize in reading instruction, formal or informal, addresses and annotations alone would fill a small volume.

Except for the several magazines included, the sources listed in the next few pages of this book tend to be potential *avenues* to further information and materials, rather than direct suppliers. I have listed them alphabetically so as to indicate no personal priority among them. All are reputable, widely recognized within the field, and quite accessible, whether they are organizations, specific publications, or reference works.

One word of advice, based on many direct personal experiences: In approaching any of these or other sources, define your inquiry, your question, your request as specifically as possible, but not so specifically that it requires a PhD in educational psychology to respond meaningfully to you. "Send me everything you have on reading" is way, way too broad, and will result either in no response at all, or one buttressed by a very loud sigh of surrender and resignation. On the other hand, "My nephew is being retained in second grade because of a reading problem. What could possibly be wrong?" is the sort of problem that can be resolved only by talking with local school officials who know more about your nephew and the local school program than any of the sources listed here could possibly illuminate.

* * *

**American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611 (312/944-6780)** A professional organization of librarians, the ALA regularly reviews new materials that are available for general purchase as well as for library acquisition. It is organized into subspecialties within the world of libraries, with separate memberships for public librarians, school librarians, and so forth, and supports activities in relevant concerns and issues—protection against censorship, for instance. Like most other professional organizations, it sponsors local affiliates, conferences, and various publications.

**Association for Childhood Education International, 11141 Georgia Avenue, Suite 200, Wheaton, MD 20902 (301/942-2443)** Primarily a professional organization of teachers particularly interested in preschool and elementary education, the ACEI is almost by definition involved in readiness and initial reading instruction, especially since those concerns are so universally associated in the public mind and in professional practice with the first few years of formal schooling.

**Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 225 North Washington, Alexandria, VA 22314 (703/549-9110)** A professional organization of educators who tend to be in positions of leadership in local and state school systems, ASCD, like most other such membership groups, sponsors its own publications, including journals, its own periodic conferences, and other services and activities pertinent to the goals and responsibilities of its members.

***Books in Print*, R.R. Bowker Company, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017 (212/916-1600)** A standard reference source in every major library and most small ones, as well as in many bookstores, *Books in Print* is a very successful attempt to list every book available in the marketplace in any given year. Its indexes make it an invaluable resource in locating specific titles available in particular interests or specialties, as well as prices, publishers, and authors or editors.

**Children's Television Workshop, One Lincoln Plaza, New York, NY 10023 (212/595-3456)** Who said television is the death of reading? Certainly not the Children's Television Workshop, which has followed through on its phenomenal successes with such programs as *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company* by publishing magazines for children, magazines that reflect in print what youngsters identify so easily and eagerly on the screen. The CTW magazines are available on most newsstands as well as by subscription.

**The Children's Book Council, Inc., 67 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003 (212/254-2666)** Supported almost entirely by its members, major American publishers of books

for children, the CBC promotes children's literature in general. Its annual Book Week is celebrated in schools and libraries throughout the nation, although Book Week is only one of a number of activities and projects it undertakes in support of quality reading for children.

**Council on Interracial Books, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 (212/757-5339)** Serving as monitor as well as catalyst, the Council reviews materials intended for reading by children, identifies bias and stereotype in such materials, suggests means by which such bias and stereotype can be eliminated, and promotes the best interests of a pluralistic society in what is available for reading.

***Early Years*, Box 1266, Darien, CT 03820 (203/655-7491)** Edited primarily for teachers in kindergarten through eighth grade, this magazine regularly carries articles and reviews materials for the teaching of reading and encouragement of literacy among youngsters. It is distributed primarily by subscription.

**Educational Press Association of America, Glassboro State College, Glassboro, NJ 08028 (609/445-7349)** A membership organization of writers, editors, and publishers, Edpress offers among other services a list of magazines published for children from preschool through eighteen years of age, only a few of which have been included here.

***El/Hi Textbooks in Print*, R.R. Bowker Company, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017 (212/916-1600)** As its title indicates, this standard reference work very successfully attempts to catalog year by year what is available in the marketplace of textbooks for instruction in elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Like other Bowker reference works, it is well-indexed, offering relatively easy access to specific information from a number of different points of inquiry and interest. One could, for instance, identify every basal reading program in the country simply by using the information in *El/Hi Textbooks in Print*.

***Encyclopedia of Associations*, Gale Research Book Company, Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226 (313/961-2242)** This standard reference work lists more membership groups

than you ever thought existed—literally thousands. Well-indexed, the encyclopedia identifies groups according to their special interests. It carries addresses, phone numbers, and thumbnail sketches of each organization, including brief notes of its conference and publication schedules. If you are a joiner looking for a group that supports literacy for instance, or remedial education, or the apple industry, for all that matters, check the *Encyclopedia of Associations* first. It is available in most major libraries.

**ERIC/RCS, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801 (217/328-3870)** The Educational Resources Information Center: Reading and Communication Skills is better known by its acronym than by its full name. One of about twenty ERIC centers funded by the federal government, ERIC/RCS is a central repository for much of the current professional information in the special areas of education it serves.

***Highlights for Children*, 803 Church Street, Honesdale, PA 18431 (717/253-1080)** A classic among magazines for children from 2 to 12, *Highlights* features stories and activities that reflect traditional values as well as contemporary theories of learning.

***The Horn Book*, Park Square Building, 31 St. James Avenue, Boston, MA 02116 (617/482-5198)** A magazine for adults interested in children's literature, *The Horn Book* regularly reviews new books for children, carries articles about good reading for youngsters, profiles or interviews children's authors, and generally promotes literacy activities for children.

***Instructor*, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212/503-2888)** Probably the most widely distributed magazine for elementary and middle school teachers in America, *Instructor* features many ideas and activities for day-to-day classroom use as well as longer articles about teaching, including the teaching of reading and the other language arts. The organization that publishes the magazine also offers books and a book club, all designed for teachers.

**International Reading Association, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714 (302/731-1600)** Probably the largest member-

ship organization in the world devoted entirely to reading as an educational specialty, the IRA publishes four journals, about ten new books a year, a newsletter, and numerous service publications, including brochures for parents interested in helping youngsters learn to read. It has a rather strong network of state and local affiliates, and its annual convention exhibit draws virtually all major American producers of instructional materials in reading as well as many smaller producers.

***Literary Market Place*, R.R. Bowker Company, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017 (212/916-1600)** An index to most of the book publishers and many magazines in the United States, *LMP* includes very useful cross-indexes according to topic and special interest. It is available in most libraries, both public and institutional.

***The Mini-Page*, Box 24110, Washington, DC 20024, (202/488-7919)** Circulated through general newspapers, *The Mini-Page* carries news items, activities, and games for youngsters, all based rather soundly on accepted principles of learning.

**National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 700 North Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611 (312/787-0977)** Pre-eminent organization in its special interest, the PTA has become a household word in most school districts. What more can be said?

**National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801 (217/328-3870)** Membership organization, the NCTE maintains a rather active interest in the teaching of reading, as well as in various other aspects of language and literature. Like similar organizations, it sponsors publications, conferences, and local and state affiliate groups.

***Pennywhistle Press*, Box 500-P, Washington, DC 20044 (703/276-3780)** Circulated through general newspapers, *Pennywhistle Press* is written and edited for youngsters, with games, activities, and articles that lend themselves to learning.

***Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine*, National Wildlife Federation, 1412 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202/797-6800)** Consistent and perennial winner of awards for excellence in journalism for children, *Ranger Rick's* is one of the best examples going of good reading for youngsters.

***Stone Soup*, Children's Art Foundation, Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063 (408/426-5557)** *Stone Soup* is one of the first and most successful of those few attempts to publish within the general marketplace materials drawn and written by youngsters themselves. "Juvenile journalism" carries unique problems as a venture in commercial publication. *Stone Soup* seems to have survived those problems where other attempts have failed.

***Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory*, R.R. Bowker Company, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017 (212/916-1600)** *Ulrich's* attempts for periodicals what *Books in Print* does for books—to list all that are currently available in the marketplace. But it does so on an international scale, not simply within the United States. If you want to know what can be found among journals and magazines in any particular area of interest, check *Ulrich's* first. It can be located in the reference section of any major library.

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## THE AUTHOR

Lloyd W. Kline began his career as a teacher in his hometown, Columbia, Pennsylvania, in the mid-1950s. Later teaching assignments took him to other public school classrooms in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and, as graduate assistant, visiting lecturer, or adjunct professor, to Albright College, Goldey Beacom College, Millersville State University, and the Universities of Massachusetts and Delaware.

He holds degrees in English from Franklin and Marshall College and Middlebury's Bread Loaf School of English, and a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts. He has consulted in schools as widely separated geographically as Texas and New Hampshire, spoken professionally to a wide variety of audiences, and served as panelist, speaker, or organizer at many professional conferences both within and outside the United States.

His interest in reading as an educational specialty dates from his service as a "hot-shot English Department chairman, when I was assigned to a district-wide curriculum committee and discovered the miracle that first grade teachers bring about—teaching kids to read!" It led eventually to service as a journal editor, then publications director for the International Reading Association.

In his first paid job as a writer, he helped meet his college costs as a part-time newspaper reporter. His formal publication credits in education date from the 1960s. He has written more than 200 articles and columns, and written or collaborated on several other books. A former member-at-large of the Board of Directors of the Educational Press Association of America, he now works as an independent writer, editor, publisher, and part-time artist.

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*Learning to Read, Teaching to Read* has been designed as a comprehensive but concise overview of a rather complex topic. It is my hope that it raises at least as many questions as it answers.

The GLOSSARY and the section on SOURCES either offer specific definitions or indicate where further information or materials on the topic of reading instruction can be located.

However, should you want to comment on the book itself or seek further information about how reading is typically taught and probably learned, I will be glad to respond to your requests or comments to the best of my abilities. Address all inquiries or other correspondence to Lloyd W. Kline, PO Box 1127, Newark, DE 19715.

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ISBN 0-931733-00-6